

S E R M O N S
UPON
THE SOVEREIGNTY
AND
WISDOM OF GOD
IN THE
AFFLICTIONS OF MEN DISPLAYED.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,
S O M E S E R M O N S
ON THE NATURE OF
CHURCH - COMMUNION,
From 1 Cor. x. 17.

BY THE LATE
Reverend and Learned MR THOMAS BOSTON,
Minister of the Gospel at ETTRICK.

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S E R M O N S

THE S O V E R E I G N T Y

W I S D O M O F G O D

A P P L I C A T I O N S O F T H E S E



C H A R L E S C O M M U N I O N

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T H E
P R E F A C E.

MR THOMAS BOSTON, the youngest of seven children, born 1676, of creditable religious parents in the town of *Dunse*, where they had some heritage; licensed to preach 1697; ordained minister at *Simprin* 1699; married 1700 to *Catharine Brown*, of good extract in the parish of *Culross*, a gentlewoman of singular wisdom, and many rare endowments, by whom he had a good many children, of whom two sons and two daughters survive them; transported to *Et-trick* 1707; died 1732; near five years before his Spouse, in the 56th year of his age:

He was of a stature above the middle size, of a venerable, amiable aspect, with his own hair originally black, of a strong and fruitful genius, of a lively imagination, (such as affords what is called *ready Wit*, which instead of cultivating, he laid under a severe restraint) of tender affections, a clear and solid judgment, his temper candid, modest, cautious, benevolent, obliging, and courteous; had a natural aversion to any thing rude or uncivil in words or behaviour, and a delicate feeling in case of meeting with any thing of that sort; could be heavy and severe in his words when

there was just occasion, or he judged the same necessary.

He was early called by divine grace, all along afterwards exercised unto godliness, walked indeed with God in all his ways, daily acknowledging him, frequent in solemn extraordinary applications to heaven, namely upon every new emergent of duty, difficulty, or trial, followed with evident, comfortable, and confirming testimonies of divine acceptance and audience; a diligent judicious observer, recorder and improver of the dispensations of divine providence, in connection with the word, his own frame and walk, and consequently of great experience in religion; he was accurately and extensively regardful of the divine law, in all manner of life and conversation, even in things that escape the notice of the most part of Christians, of a tender conscience, carefully watching against, and avoiding the appearance of evil; compassionate and sympathising with the distressed, charitable to the needy, to the degree of religious, setting apart the tenth of his worldly substance yearly for their supply, a dutiful husband, an indulgent father; a sincere, a faithful, and affectionate friend; to which he had a particular cast in his temper, which proved a rich blessing to them who were favoured with his friendship.

He was a considerable scholar in all the parts of theological learning, and excelled in some of them: What he was for a *Humanist*,

even towards the latter end of his days, his translation of his own work, on the *Hebrew* accentuation, into good *Roman Latin*, will abundantly testify; was well seen in the *Greek*; and for the skill he attained in the *Hebrew*, he will, we are satisfied, in ages to come, be admired, and had in honour by the learned world; especially when it is understood under what disadvantages, in what obscurity and seclusion from learned assistances the work was composed; and when it is considered how far, notwithstanding, he has outstripped all that went before him in that study, namely, of the *Hebrew* accentuation; he understood the *French*, and, for the sake of comparing translations, could read the *Dutch* Bible. There were few pieces of learning that he had not some good taste of: But all his knowledge behoved to be otherwise discovered than by his profession of it. He was a hard student, of indifatigable application; so that, whatever he was once heartily engaged in, he knew not to quit, till by help from heaven, and incessant labour, he got through it. — Had a great knowledge and understanding of human nature, of the most proper methods of addressing it, and the most likely handles for catching hold of it. He had an admirable talent at drawing a paper, which made a statesman, * a very able judge, say, (when *Mr Boston* was clerk of the synod.

* *Mr Ballie of Jerviswood.*

of *Merse* and *Teviotdale*) that he was the best clerk he had ever known in any court, civil or ecclesiastical. An admirer of other mens parts and gifts, liberally giving them their due praise, even though in some things they differed from him: Far from censorious, assuming, or detracting.

As a minister he had on his spirit a deep and high sense of divine things; was mighty in the Scriptures, in his acquaintance with the letter, with the spirit and sense of them, in happily applying and accommodating them for explaining and illustrating the subject. His knowledge and insight into the mystery of Christ was great, though a humbling sense of his want of it was like to have quite sunk and laid him by after he began to preach. He had a peculiar talent of going deep into the mysteries of the gospel, and at the same time making them plain, making intelligible their connection with, and influence upon gospel-holiness: Notable instances of which may be seen in his most valuable treatise of the *Covenant*, and in his sermons of Christ in the *form of a servant*. His invention was rich, but judiciously bounded; his thoughts were always just, and often new; his expressions proper and pure; his illustrations and similies often surprising: His method natural and clear, his delivery grave and graceful, with an air of earnestness, meekness, assurance and authority tempered together. No wonder his

ministrations in holy things were all of them dear and precious to the saints. He was fixed and established upon solid and rational grounds in the reformation principles, in opposition to Popery, Prelacy, superstition and persecution. Was pleasant and lively in conversation, but always with a *Decorum* to his character: Quite free of that sourness of temper, or *ascetical* rigidity, that generally possesses men of a retired life. He fed and watched with diligence the flock over which the Holy Ghost made him overseer, and, notwithstanding his eager pursuit of that study which was his delight, he abated nothing of his preparation for the sabbath, nor of his work abroad in the parish; nor did he so much as use the short-hand, whereof he was master, but always wrote out his sermons fair, and generally as full as he preached them: Far from serving the Lord with that which cost him nothing. It was his delight to spend and be spent in the service of the gospel. Was a faithful, and at the same time, a prudent reprovcr of sin. Was endued with a rich measure of Christian wisdom and prudence, without craft or guile, whereby he was exceeding serviceable in judicatories, and excellently fitted for counsel in intricate cases. Zeal and knowledge were in him united to a pitch rarely to be met with. Had a joint concern for purity and peace in the church: No man more zealous for the former, and, at the same time, more

studious of the latter, having observed and felt so much of the mischief of diversion and separation. Was exceeding cautious and scrupulous of any thing new or unprecedented, until he was thoroughly satisfied of its necessity and grounds. It was his settled mind, that solidly and strongly to establish the truth, was in many cases the best, the shortest, and the most effectual way to confute error, without irritating and enflaming the passions of men to their own and to the truth's prejudice. Therefore, in his explication and vindication of the *Protestant doctrine*, in a paroxysm quarrelled and condemned in a *certain book*, he answered all and every body, but took notice expressly of nobody. He obeyed the voice, 1 Tim. vi. 11. *But thou, O man of God, flee these things*, being in an uncommon degree dead to the world: Finding, says he, in the account of his life, the business of it ensnaring to my mind, I had neither heart nor hand for it. On all which accounts he was much respected and regarded, not only by his brethren that differed from him, but generally by all sorts of men. To conclude, he was a scribe singularly instructed unto the kingdom.—Happy in finding out acceptable words.—A *workman* that needed not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. A burning and a shining light.—*The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance.*

Tho' a skilful hand might in fewer words have drawn his character to much better

purpose, there is no partiality by overdoing in what is said, if intimate friendship for many years, and the account of his own life, done by himself, are allowed for competent evidences : But the hearing him preach one sermon, would have said something that cannot be said now.

His removal in the juncture wherein he was taken away, some are satisfied, had on several accounts more of divine anger in it, with respect to this church, than is commonly apprehended.

It might have been more edifying, had there been room for it here, to have heard of him in his own words, from the general account of his life, by him addressed to his children : Out of which shall, with their leave, subjoin only a few touches towards the close of it, as follows :

‘ Thus also I was much addicted to peace,
‘ and averse from controversy ; though once
‘ engaged therein, I was set to go through
‘ with it. I had no great difficulty to retain
‘ a due honour and charity for my bretheren
‘ differing from me both in opinion and practice : But then I was in no great hazard,
‘ neither of being swayed by them to depart
‘ from what I judged truth or duty. With-
‘ al, it was easy to me to yield to them in
‘ things wherein I found not myself in
‘ conscience bound up. Whatever precipitant steps I have made in the course of
‘ my life, which I desire to be humbled for,

‘rashness in conduct was not my weak side.
‘But, since the Lord, by his grace, brought
‘me to consider things, it was much my ex-
‘ercise to discern sin and duty in particular
‘cases; being afraid to venture on things,
‘until I should see myself called thereto:
‘But when the matter was cleared to me, I
‘generally stuck fast by it, being as much a-
‘fraid to desert the way which I took to be
‘pointed out to me. I never had the art of
‘making rich, nor could I ever heartily ap-
‘ply myself to the managing of secular af-
‘fairs. Even the secular way of managing
‘the discipline of the church, was so unac-
‘ceptable to me, that I had no heart to dip
‘in the public church management. What
‘appearances I made any time in these mat-
‘ters were not readily in that way.’ *He con-*
cludes.

‘And thus have I given some account of
‘the days of my vanity. Upon the whole, I
‘bless my God in Jesus Christ, that ever he
‘made me a Christian, and took an early
‘dealing with my soul: That ever he made
‘me a minister of the gospel, and gave me
‘some insight into the doctrine of his grace;
‘and that ever he gave me the blessed Bible,
‘and brought me acquainted with the origi-
‘nals, and especially with the *Hebrew* text.
‘The world hath all along been a step-dame
‘unto me, and whatsoever I would have at-
‘tempted to nestle in it, there was a thorn of
‘uneasiness laid for me. Man is born cry-

ing, lives complaining, and dies disappointed from that quarter. *All is vanity and vexation of spirit, I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.*

Habitual unreconciledness to the cross, and a palpable deficiency in many of the duties incumbent on us, as members of the body of Christ, mightily mar our Christian comfort, our edification, our usefulness: And instead of adorning, they cast a dark shade on our holy profession. For remedy in both cases, the Lord in his kind providence is sending us fresh assistance in the two following treatises. Both the subjects are set in a new and engaging light. It is not amiss the reader should know, that the former, namely, that of the *Crook in one's Lot*, was among the last subjects the blessed author handled: And that the revising of it so far (for he got not through his notes) was amongst his last works with the pen. We shall leave it to exercise the readers attention how far he himself revised; and where we have only his notes as he preached them.

May the same divine blessing, which the author often and earnestly sought to accompany ought of his that was, or should be called forth for the service of the church, go along with these treatises that here follow.

ALEX. COLDEN.

GAB. WILSON.

H. DAVISON.

ing lives complaining, and dispirited
ed from the present. All is vanity and
evanescent as smoke, I have written for my fel-

lowers. I have written and written to the end, and
a painful deficiency in many of the duties
incumbent on me as members of the body of
Christ, miserably marred our Christian conduct,
our education, our usefulness: And instead
of adorning, they cast a dark shade on our
body perfection. For truth on both sides
the fact is that kind Providence is leading
us through difficulties in the two following tra-
jectories. Both the objects are in a new and
engaging light. It is not merely the read-
er should know that the former, namely,
that of the work in our day, was among the
last topics of the illustrious author handled: And
that the revision of it is late (for he got not
through his notes) was amongst his last
works with the pen. We shall leave it to
oversee the reader's attention how far he him-
self revises, and where we have only his
notes as he presented them.

After the time of his writing, which the
author of this and cannot possibly be to accom-
pany one of his that was, or should be call-
ed forth for the service of the church, go a-
long with their readers that have followed.

ALEX. GOLDEN
GAB. WILSON
H. DAWSON

THE
SOVEREIGNTY
AND
WISDOM OF GOD
IN THE
AFFLICTIONS OF MEN
DISPLAYED.

ECCLES. vii. 13.

*Consider the work of God: For who can make that
straight which he hath made crooked.*

A Just view of afflicting incidents is altogether necessary to a Christian deportment under them: And that view is to be obtained only by faith, not by sense. For it is the light of the word alone that represents them justly, discovering in them *the work of God*, and consequently designs becoming the divine perfections. These perceived by the eye of faith, and duly considered, one has a just view of afflicting incidents, fitted to quell the turbulent motions of corrupt affections under dismal outward appearances.

It is under this view, that *Solomon*, in the preceding part of this chapter, advances several paradoxes, which are surprising determinations in fa-

A

your of certain things, that to the eye of sense,
 looking gloomy and hideous, are therefore general-
 ly reputed grievous and shocking, he pronounceth
the day of one's death to be better than the day of his
birth, namely, the day of the death of one, who,
 having become the friend of God through faith,
 hath led a life to the honour of God, and service of
 his generation; and thereby raised himself the good
 and savory name better than precious ointment, ver. 1.
 In like manner, he pronounceth the house of mourn-
 ing to be preferable to the house of feasting, sorrow
 to laughter, and a wise man's rebuke to a fool's song;
 for that, howbeit the latter are indeed the more
 pleasant, yet the former are the more profitable,
 ver. 2.—6. And observing with concern, how men
 are in hazard, not only from the world's frowns
 and ill usage, oppression making a wise man mad, but
 also from its smiles and caresses, a gift destroying the
 heart; since whatever way it goes, there is danger,
 he pronounceth the end of every worldly thing better
 than the beginning thereof, ver. 7, 8. And from the
 whole, he justly infers, That it is better to be hum-
 ble and patient, than proud and impatient, under af-
 flicting dispensations; since in the former case, one
 wisely submits to what is really best; in the latter,
 he fights against it, ver. 8. And he exhorts from
 being angry with our lot, because of the adversity
 found therein, ver. 9. cautious against making odi-
 ous comparisons of former and present times, in that
 point insinuating undue reflections on the provi-
 dence of God, ver. 10. and against that querulous
 and fretful disposition, he first prescribes a general
 remedy, namely, holy wisdom, is that which en-
 ables one to make the best of every thing, and even
 giveth life in killing circumstances, ver. 11, 12.
 And then a particular remedy, consisting in a due
 application of that wisdom towards the taking of
 a just view of the case, Consider the work of God:

For who can make that straight which he hath made crooked?

In which words are proposed, (1.) The remedy itself. (2.) The suitableness thereof. *First*, The remedy itself is a wise eying of the hand of God in all we find to bear hard upon us; *Consider the work, or see thou the doing of God*, viz in the crooked, rough, and disagreeable parts of thy lot, the crosses thou findest in it. Thou seest very well the cross itself; yea, thou turnest it over and over in thy mind, and leisurely views it on all sides; thou lookest withal to this and the other second cause of it, and so thou art in a foam and fret; but, wouldest thou be quieted and satisfied in the matter, lift up thine eyes towards heaven, *see the doing of God* in it, the operation of his hand: Look at that, and consider it well; eye the first cause of the crook in thy lot, behold how it is the *work of God*, his *doing*. *Secondly*, As for the suitableness of this remedy, that view of the crook in our lot is very suitable to still incident risings of heart, quiet us under it: *For who can*, (that is, none can) *make that straight which God hath made crooked?* As to the crook in thy lot, God hath made it; and it must continue while he will have it so. Shouldst thou ply thine utmost force to even it, or *make it straight*, thine attempt will be vain; it will not alter for all thou canst do, only he who made it can mend it, or *make it straight*. This consideration, this view of the matter, is a proper means, at once, to silence and to satisfy men, and so to bring them unto a dutiful submission to their Maker and Governor, under the crook in their lot.

Now we take up the purpose of the text in these three *Doctrines*. I. *Whatsoever crook there is in one's lot, it is of God's making*. II. *What God sees meet to mar, one will not be able to mend in his lot*, III. *The considering of the crook in the lot, as the work of God*,

or of his making, is a proper means to bring one to a Christian deportment under it.

DOCTRINE I. *Whatsoever crook there is in one's lot, it is of God's making.*

Here two things fall to be considered, namely, *the crook itself, and God's making of it.*

I. As to the crook itself, *the crook in the lot*, for the better understanding thereof, these few things following are premised: 1. There is a certain train or course of events by the providence of God, falling to every one of us during our life in this world: And that is our lot; as being allotted to us by the sovereign God, our Creator and Governor, *in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways.* This train of events is widely different to different persons, according to the will and pleasure of the sovereign manager, who ordereth mens conditions in the world in a great variety, some moving in a higher, some in a lower sphere. 2. In that train or course of events, some fall out crooks to us, and against the grain; and these make *the crook* in our lot. While we are here, there will be crooks events, as well as agreeable ones, in our lot and condition. Sometimes things are softly and agreeably gliding on; but, by and by, there is some incident which alters that course, grates us, and pains us, as when having made a wrong step, we begin to halt. 3. Every body's lot in this world has some crook in it. Complainers are apt to make odious comparisons. They look about, and taking a distant view of the condition of others, can discern nothing in it, but what is *straight*, and just to one's wish: So they pronounce their neighbours lot wholly straight. But that is a false verdict; there is no perfection here, no lot out of heaven without a crook. For, as to

all the works that are done under the sun, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. That which is crooked cannot be made straight, Eccl. i. 14, 15. Who would have thought but *Haman's* lot was very straight while his family was in a flourishing condition, and he prospering in riches and honour, being prime minister of state in the *Persian* court, and standing high in the king's favour? Yet there was, at the same time, a crook in his lot, which so galled him, that *all this availed him nothing, Est. v. 13.* Every one feels for himself where he is pinched, though others perceive it not. Nobody's lot, in this world, is wholly crooked; there are always some straight and even parts in it. Indeed, when men's passions having got up, have cast a mist over their minds, they are ready to say, *All is wrong with them, nothing right:* But though in hell that tale is, and ever will be true, yet it is never true in this world; for *there*, indeed, there is not a drop of comfort allowed, *Luke xvi. 25.* but here it always holds good, that *it is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Lam. iii. 22.* Lastly, The crook in the lot came into the world by sin; It is owing to the fall, *Rom. v. 12.* *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin,* under which *death* the crook in the lot is comprehended, as a state of comfort or prosperity is, in scripture stile, expressed by *living, 1 Sam. xxv. 6. John iv. 50, 51.* Sin so bowed the hearts and minds of men, as they became crooked in respect of the holy law; and God justly so bowed their lot, as it became crooked too. And this crook in our lot inseparably follows our sinful condition, till, dropping this body of sin and death, we get within heaven's gates.

These being premised, *a crook in the lot* speaks in the general, two things, (1.) *Adversity.* (2.) *Continuance.* Accordingly it makes a day of adversity,

opposed to the day of prosperity in the verse immediately following the text.

The *crook* in the lot is, *First*, Some one or other piece of *adversity*. The prosperous part of one's lot, which goes forward according to one's wish, is the straight and even part of it ; the adverse part, going a contrary way, is the crooked part thereof. God hath intermixed these two in mens condition in this world ; that, as there is some prosperity therein, making the straight line, so there is also some adversity, making the crooked. The which mixture hath place, not only in the lot of saints, who are told, that *in the world you shall have tribulation*, but even in the lot of all as already observed. *Secondly*, It is adversity of some *continuance*. We do not reckon it a *crooked* thing, which though forcibly bended and bowed together, yet presently recovers its former straightness. There are twinges of the rod of adversity, which passing like a stitch in one's side, all is immediately set to rights again ; one's lot may be suddenly overclouded, and the cloud vanish ere he is aware. But under the *crook*, one having leisure to find his smart, is in some concern to get the crook evened. So the *crook in the lot* is adversity continued for shorter or longer time.

Now there is a threefold crook in the lot incident to the children of men. (I.) One made by a *cross* dispensation, which howsoever in itself passing, yet hath lasting effects. Such a crook did *Herod's* cruelty make in the lot of the mothers in *Bethlehem*, who by the murderers were left *weeping for their slain children, and would not be comforted, because they were not*, Mat. ii. 18. A slip of the foot may soon be made, which will make a man go halting all along after. *As the fishes are taken in a vile net—so are the sons of men snared in an evil time*, Eccl. ix. 12. The thing may fall out in a moment

under which the party shall go halting to the grave.

(2.) There is a crook made by a train of cross dispensations, whether of the same or different kinds, following hard upon one another, and leaving lasting effects behind them. Thus, in the case of *Job*, while one messenger of evil tidings was yet speaking, another came, *Job* i. 16, 17, 18. Cross events coming one upon the neck of another, deep calling unto deep, making a fore crook. In that case the party is like unto one, who, recovering his sliding foot from one infirm piece of ground, sets it on another equally unfirm, which immediately gives way under him too; or like unto one, who travelling in an unknown mountaneous track, after having with difficulty made his way over one mountain, is expecting to see the plain country, but instead thereof, there comes in view, time after time, a new mountain to be passed. This crook in *Asaph's* lot had like to have made him give up all his religion, until he went into the sanctuary, where this mystery of providence was unriddled to him, *Psal.* lxxiii. 13.—17. *Solomon* observes, That there being just men, unto whom it happened according to the work of the wicked, *Eccl.* viii. 14. Providence taking a run against them, as if they were to be run down for good and all. Whoever they be whose life in no part thereof affords them experience of this, sure *Joseph* missed not of it in his young days, nor *Jacob* in his middle days, nor *Peter* in his old days, *John* xxi. 18. nor our Saviour all his days. (3.) There is a crook made by one cross dispensation, with lasting effects thereof coming in the room of another removed. Thus one crook straightened there is another made in its place; and so there is still a crook. Want of children had long been the crook in *Rachel's* lot, *Gen.* xxx. 1. That was at length evened to her mind; but then she got another in its stead, *hard labour*

in travailing to bring forth, *chap. xxxv. 16.* This world is a wilderness in which we may indeed get our station changed: But the remove will be out of one wilderness station to another. When one part of the lot is evened, readily some other part thereof will be crooked.

More particularly, *the crook in the lot* hath in it four things of the nature of that which is *crooked*.

First, *Disagreeableness*. A crooked thing is wayward; and being laid to a rule answers it not, but declines from it. There is not in any body's lot, any such thing as a *crook* in respect of the will and purpose of God. Take the most harsh and dismal dispensation in one's lot, and lay it to the eternal decree made in the depths of infinite wisdom, before the world began, and it will answer it exactly without the least deviation, *all things being wrought after the counsel of his will*, Eph. i. 11. Lay it to the providential will of God, in the government of the world, and there is a perfect harmony. If *Paul* is to be bound at *Jerusalem*, and delivered into the hands of the Gentiles, it is the will of the Lord it should be so; *Acts xxi. 11, 14.* Wherefore the greatest crook of the lot on earth, is straight in heaven; there is no disagreeableness in it there. But in every body's lot there is a crook in respect of their mind and natural inclination. The adverse dispensation lies cross to that rule, and will by no means answer it, nor harmonize with it. When divine providence lays the one to the other, there is a manifest disagreeableness: The man's will goes one way, and the dispensation another way; the will bends upward, the cross events presseth down: So they are contrary. And there, and there only, lies the *crook*. It is this *disagreeableness* which makes the crook in the lot fit matter of trial and exercise to us, in this our probation: In the which, if thou wouldst approve thyself to God,

walking by faith, not by sight, thou must quiet thyself, in the will and purpose of God, and not insist that it *should be according to thy mind*, Job xxxiv. 23.

Secondly, *Unfightlinefs*. Crooked things are unpleasant to the eye : And no crook in the lot *seemeth to be joyous, but grievous*, making but an unfightly appearance. *Heb. xii. 11.* Therefore men need to beware of giving way to their thoughts to dwell on the crook in their lot, and of keeping it too much in view. *David* shews a hurtful experience in his in that kind, *Psal. xxxix. 3. While I was musing, the fire burned.* *Jacob* acted a wiser part, called his youngest son *Benjamin*, the son of the right-hand, whom the dying mother named *Ben-oni*, the son of my sorrow ; by this means providing, that the crook in his lot should not be set afresh in his view, on every occasion of mentioning the name of his son. Indeed a Christian may safely take a steady and leisurely view of the crook in his lot in the light of the holy word, which represents it as the discipline of the covenant. So faith will discover a hidden fightlinefs in it, under a very unfightly outward appearance ; perceiving the suitability thereof to the infinite goodness, love, and wisdom of God, and to the real and most valuable interest of the party ; by which means one comes to take pleasure, and that a most refined pleasure, *in distresses*, 2 Cor. xii. 10. But whatever the crook in the lot be to the eye of faith, it is not at all pleasant to the eye of sense.

Thirdly, *Unfitness for motion*. *Solomon* observes the cause of the uneasy and ungraceful walking of the lame, *Prov. xxvi. 7. The legs of the lame are not equal.* This uneasiness they find, who are exercised about the crook in their lot : A high spirit and a low adverse lot, makes great difficulty in the Christian walk, there is nothing that gives tempt-

ation more easy access, than the crook in the lot; nothing more apt to occasion out-of-the-way steps. Therefore saith the apostle, *Heb. xii. 13. Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way.* They are to be pitied, then, who are labouring under it, and not to be rigidly censured; though they are rare persons who learn this lesson, till taught by their own experience. It is long since *Job* made an observe in this case, which holds good unto this day, *Job xii. 5. He that is ready to slip with his feet, is as a lamp despised in the thoughts of him that is at ease.*

Lastly, *Aptness to catch hold and entangle*, like *hooks, fish-hooks*, *Amos iv. 2.* The crook in the lot doth so very readily make impression, to the ruffling and fretting one's spirit, irritating corruption, that Satan fails not to make diligent use of it to these dangerous purposes: The which point, once gained by the tempter; the tempted, ere he is aware, finds himself entangled as in a thicket, out of which he knows not how to extricate himself. In that temptation it often proves like a crooked stick troubling a standing pool; the which not only raiseth up the mud all over, but brings up from the bottom some very ugly thing. Thus it brought up a spice of blasphemy and Atheism in *Asaph's* case, *Psal. lxxiii. 13. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence:* As if he had said, There is nothing at all in religion, it is a vain and empty thing, that profiteth nothing; I was a fool to have been at care about purity and holiness, whether of heart or life. Ah! Is this the pious *Asaph*! how is he turned so quite unlike himself! But the crook in the lot is the handle, whereby the tempter makes surprising discoveries of latent corruption; even in the best.

This is the nature of the crook in the lot.

Let us now observe *what part of the lot it falls in.*

And, in the *general* three conclusions may be established upon this head. *First*, It may fall in *any part* of the lot; there is no exempted one in the case; for, sin being found in every part, the crook may take place in any part. Being *all as an unclean thing, we may all fade as a leaf*, Is. lxiv. 6. The main stream of sin, which the crook readily follows, runs in very different channels, in the case of different persons. And, in regard of the various dispositions of the minds of men, that may prove a sinking weight unto me, which another would go very lightly under. *Secondly*, It may once fall in *many parts* of the lot, the Lord calling *as in a solemn day*, one's terrors round about, Lam. ii. 22. Sometimes God makes one notable crook in a man's lot; But its name may be *Gad*, being but the fore-runner of *a troop* which *cometh*. Then the crooks are multiplied, so that the party is made to halt on each side. While one stream, let in from one quarter, is running full against him, another is let in on him from another quarter, till, in the end the waters break in on every hand. *Thirdly*, It often falls in the *tender part*, I mean the part of the lot wherein one is least able to bear it, or, at least, thinks he is so, Psal. lv. 12. 13. *It was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have born it—But it was thou, a man, mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance.* If there is any one part of the lot, which, of all other, one is disposed to nestle in, the thorn will readily be laid there, especially if he belongs to God: In that thing wherein he is least of all able to be touched, he will be sure to be pressed. There the trial will be taken of him: For *there is the grand competition with Christ. I take from them the desires of their eyes, and that whereupon they set their minds*, Ezek. xxiv. 25. Since the crook

in the lot is the special trial appointed for every one, it is altogether reasonable, and becoming the wisdom of God, that it fall on that which of all things doth most rival him.

But more *particularly*, the *crook* may be observed to fall in these four parts of the lot.

First, In the *natural* part, affecting persons considered as of the make allotted for them by *the great God that formed all things*. The parents of mankind, *Adam* and *Eve*, were formed altogether sound and entire, without the least blemish, whether in soul or body; but, in the formation of their posterity, there often appears a notable variation from the original. Bodily defects, superfluities, deformities, infirmities, natural or accidental, make *the crook* in the lot of some: They have something unsightly or grievous about them. *Crooks* of this kind more or less observable, are very common and ordinary, the best not exempted from them: And it is purely owing to sovereign pleasure they are not more numerous. *Tender eyes* made the crook in the lot of *Leah*, Gen. xxix. 17. *Rachel's* beauty was ballanced with *barrenness*, the crook in her lot, chap. xxx. 1. *Paul* the great apostle of the *Gentiles*, was, it should seem, no personable man, but of a mean outward appearance, for which fools were apt to contemn him, 2 Cor. x. 10. *Timothy* was of a crazy frame, weakly and sickly, 1 Tim. v. 23. And there is a yet far more considerable crook in the lot of the *lame*, the *blind*, the *deaf* and *dumb*. Some are weak to a degree in their intellects; and it is the crook in the lot of several bright souls to be overcast with clouds, notably bemisted and darkened from the crazy bodies they are lodged in; an eminent instance whereof we have in the grave, wise, and patient *Job*, going mourning without the sun, yea, standing up and crying in the congregation, Job xxx. 28.

Secondly, It may fall in the *honorary* part. There is an *honour* due to *all men*, the small as well as the great, 1 *Pet.* ii. 17. and that upon the ground of the original constitution of human nature, as it was framed *in the image of God*. But, in the sovereign disposal of holy providence, the crook in the lot of some falls here: They are neglected and slighted; their credit is still kept low; they go through the world under a cloud, being put into an ill name, their reputation sunk. This sometimes is the native consequence of their own foolish and sinful conduct; as, in the case of *Dinah*, who, by her gadding abroad to satisfy her youthful curiosity, regardless of, and therefore not waiting for a providential call, brought a lasting stain on her honour, *Gen.* xxxiv. But where the Lord minds a crook of this kind in one's lot, innocence will not be able to ward it off in an ill-natur'd world: Neither will true merit be able to make head against it, to make one's lot stand straight in that part. Thus *David* represents his case, *Psal.* xxxi. 11, 12, 13. *They that did see me without, fled from me: I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind, I am like a broken vessel. For I have heard the slander of many,*

Thirdly, It may fall in the *vocational* part. Whatever is mens calling or station in the world, be it sacred or civil, the crook in their lot may take its place therein. *Isaiab* was an eminent Prophet, but most unsuccessful, *Is.* liii. 1. *Jeremiah* met with such a train of discouragements and ill usage, in the exercise of his sacred function, that he was well near giving it up, saying, *I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name,* *Jer.* xx. 9. The *Psalmist* observes this crook often to be made in the lot of some men very industrious in their civil business, who *sow the fields*—and at times God *blesseth them*—and *suffereth not their cattle to decrease*: But again, *they are minished,*

and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow, Psal. cvii. 37, 38, 39. Such a crook was made in Job's lot, after it had long stood even. Some manage their employments with all care and diligence, the husbandman carefully labouring his ground: The sheep-master diligent to know the state of his flocks, and looking well to his herds: The tradesman early and late at his business: The merchant diligently plying his, watching and falling in with the most fair and promising opportunities; but there is such a crook in that part of their lot, as all they are able to do can by no means even. For why? the most proper means used for compassing an end are insignificant, without a word of divine appointment commanding their success: *Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?* Lam. iii. 37. People play their business with skill and industry, but the wind turns in their face, providence croseth their enterprizes, disconcerts their measures, frustrates their hopes and expectations, renders their endeavours successless, and so puts and keeps them still in straitening circumstances. *So the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise,* Eccl. ix. 11. Providence interposing, crooks the measures which human prudence and industry had laid straight towards the respective ends; so the swift lose the race, the strong the battle, and the wise miss of bread: While, in the mean time, some one or other providential incident, supplying the defect of human wisdom, conduct and ability, the slow gain the race, and carry the prize; the weak win the battle, and enrich themselves with the spoil; and bread falls into the lap of the fool.

Lastly, It may fall in the relational part. Relations are the joints of society; and there the crook in the lot may take place, one's smartest pain being often felt in these joints. They are in their

nature the springs of man's comfort ; yet they often run the greatest bitterness to him. Sometimes this crook is occasioned by the loss of relations. Thus a crook was made in the lot of *Jacob*, by means of the death of *Rachel*, his beloved wife, and the loss of *Joseph*, his son and darling, which had like to have made him go halting to the grave. *Job* laments this crook in his lot, *Job* xvi. 7. *Thou hast made desolate all my company* ; meaning his dear children, every one of whom he had laid in the grave, not so much as one son or daughter left him. Again, sometimes it is made through the afflicting hand of God lying heavy on them ; the which, in virtue of the relation, recoils on the party, as is feelingly expressed by that believing woman, *Matth.* xv. 22. *Have mercy on me, O Lord, — my daughter is grievously vexed.* *Ephraim* felt the smart of a course of family afflictions, when he called his son's name *Beriah*, because it went evil with his house, *1 Chron.* vii. 23. Since all is not only vanity, but vexation of spirit, it can hardly miss, but the more of these springs of comfort are opened to man, he must, at one time or other, find he has but the more sources of sorrows to gush out and spring in upon him ; the sorrow always proportioned to the comfort found in them, or expected from them ; and, finally, the crook is sometimes made here by their proving uncomfortable through the disagreeableness of their temper, disposition, and way. There was a crook in *Job's* lot, by means of an undutiful, ill-natured wife, *Job* xix. 17. in *Abigail's*, by means of a surly, ill-tempered husband, *1 Sam.* xxv. 25. in *Eli's* through the perverseness and obstinacy of his children, *chap.* ii. 25. in *Jonathan's*, through the furious temper of his father, *chap.* xx. 30. 33. So do men often-times find their greatest cross where they expected their greatest comfort. Sin hath un-

hinged the whole creation, and made every relation susceptible of the crook. In the family are found masters hard and unjust, servants froward and unfaithful; in neighbourhood, men selfish and uneasy; in the church, ministers unedifying, and offensive in their walk, and people contemptuous and disorderly, a burden to the spirits of ministers; in the state, magistrates oppressive, and discountenancers of that which is good, and subjects turbulent and seditious; all these cause crooks in the lot of their relatives.

And thus far of the *crook* itself.

II. Having seen the *crook* itself, we are, in the next place, to consider of *God's making it*. And here is to be shewn, (1.) *That* it is of God's making. (2.) *How* it is of his making. (3.) *Why* he makes it.

FIRST, That the crook in the lot, whatever it is, is of God's making, appears from these three considerations.

First, It cannot be questioned, but the crook in the lot, considered *as* the crook, is a penal evil, whatever it is for the *matter* thereof: That is, whether the thing in itself, its immediate cause and occasion, be sinful or not, it is certainly a *punishment or affliction*. Now as it may be, *as such* holily and justly brought on us, by our sovereign Lord and Judge, so he expressly claims the *doing or making* of it, *Amos* iii. 6. *Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?* Wherefore, since there can be no penal evil, but of God's making, and the crook in the lot is such an evil, it is necessarily concluded to be of God's making.

Secondly, It is evident, from the scripture doctrine of *divine providence*, that God brings about every man's lot, and all the parts thereof. He sits at the helm of human affairs, and turns them about whithersoever he listeth, *Whatsoever the Lord*

pleased, that did he in heaven and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places, Psal. cxxxv. 6. There is not any thing whatsoever befalls us without his overruling hand. The same providence that brought us out of the womb, bringeth us to, and fixeth us in, the condition and place allotted for us, by him who *hath determined the times and the bounds of our habitation, Acts xvii. 26.* It over-rules the smallest and most casual things about us, such as *hairs of our head falling on the ground, Matth. x. 29, 30.* *A lot cast into the lap, Prov. xvi. 33.* Yea, the free acts of our will, whereby we chuse for ourselves, for, even *the King's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water, Prov. xxi. 1.* And the whole steps we make, and which others make in reference to us; for *the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps, Jer. x. 23.* And this, whether these steps causing the crook be deliberate and sinful ones, such as, *Joseph's brethren selling him into Egypt; or whether they be undesigned, such as man-slaughter, purely casual, as when one hewing wood kills his neighbour with the head of the ax slipping from the helve, Deut. xix. 5.* For there is a holy and wise providence that governs the sinful and the heedless actions of men, as a rider doth a lame horse, of whose halting, not he, but the horse's own lameness, is the true and proper cause: Wherefore, in the former of these cases, God is said to have sent *Joseph into Egypt, Gen. xlv. 7.* And in the latter, to *deliver one into his neighbour's hand, Exod. xxi. 13.*

Lastly, God hath, by an eternal decree, immovable as mountains of brass, (Zech. vi. 1.) appointed the whole of every one's lot, the crooked parts thereof as well as the straight. By the same eternal decree, whereby the high and low parts of the earth, the mountains and the valleys, were appointed, are the heights and depths, the prosperity and ad-

versity in the lot of the inhabitants thereof, determined; and they are brought about, in time, in a perfect agreeableness thereto. The mystery of providence, in the government of the world, is, in all the parts thereof, the building reared up of God, in exact conformity to the plan in his decree, *who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will*, Eph. i. 11. So that there is never a crook in one's lot, but may be run up to this original. Hereof *Job* piously sets us an example, in his own case, *Job* xxiii. 13. 14. *He is in one mind, and who can turn him? And what his soul desireth, even that he doth. For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: And many such things are with him.*

SECONDLY, That we may see *how* the crook in the lot is of God's making, we must distinguish between pure sinless crooks, and impure sinful ones.

First, There are pure and sinless crooks: The which are mere afflictions, cleanly crosses; grievous indeed, but not defiling. Such were *Lazarus's* poverty, *Rachel's* barrenness, *Leah's* tender eyes, the blindness of the man who had been so from his birth, *John* ix. i. Now the crooks of this kind are of God's making by the efficacy of his power directly bringing them to pass, and causing them to be. He is the *maker* of the poor, Prov. xvii. 5. *Who so mocketh the poor, reproacheth his Maker*; that is, reproacheth God who made him poor, according to that, 1 Sam. ii. 7. *The Lord maketh poor*. It is he that hath the key of the womb, and, as he sees meet, *shuts* it, (1 Sam. i. 5.) or *opens* it, Gen. xxix. 31. And it is *he that formed the eye*, Psal. xciv. 9. And the man was born blind, *that the works of God should be made manifest in him*, *John* ix. 3. Therefore he saith to *Moses*, Exod. iv. 11. *Who maketh the dumb or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord?* Such

crooks in the lot are of God's making, in the most ample sense, and in their full comprehension, being the direct effects of his agency, as well as the heavens and the earth are.

Secondly, There are impure sinful crooks, which, in their own nature, are sins as well as afflictions, defiling as well as grievous. Such was the crook made in *David's* lot, through his family-disorders, the defiling of *Tamar*, the murder of *Ammon*, the rebellion of *Abalom*, all of them unnatural. Of the same kind was that made in *Job's* lot, by the *Sabeans* and *Chaldeans* taking away his substance, and slaying his servants. As these were the afflictions of *David* and *Job*, respectively, so they were the sins of the actors, the unhappy instruments thereof. Thus one and the same thing may be, to one a heinous sin, defiling and laying him under guilt, and to another an affliction, laying him under suffering only. Now, the crooks of this kind are not of God's making, in the same latitude as these of the former; for he neither puts evil in the heart of any, nor stirreth up to it; *He cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man*, Jam. i. 13. But they are of his making, by his holy permission of them, powerful bounding of them, and wise over-ruling of them to some good end.

First, He holily permits them, suffering men to walk in their own ways, Acts xiv. 16. Though he is not the author of those sinful crooks, causing them to be by the efficacy of his power; yet if he did not permit them, willing not to hinder them, they could not be at all; for *he shutteth, and no man openeth*, Rev. iii. 7. But he justly withholds his grace which the sinner does not desire, takes off the restraint under which he is uneasy, and, since the sinner will be gone, lays the reins on his neck, and leaves him to the swing of his lust. *Hof. iv. 7. Ephraim is joined to idols: Let him alone.* Psal.

lxxxii, 11, 12. *Israel would none of me. So I gave them up to their own hearts lusts.* In which unhappy situation, the sinful crook doth, from the sinners own proper motion, natively and infallibly follow; even as water runs down the hill, wherever there is a gap left open before it. So in these circumstances, *Israel walked in their own counsels*, ver. 12. And thus this kind of crook is of God's making, as a just judge, punishing the sufferer by it. The which view of the matter silenced *David* under *Shimei's* cursings, 2 Sam. xvi. 10. *Let him alone, and let him curse: For the Lord hath bidden him.*

Secondly, He powerfully bounds them, *Psal. lxxvi. 10. The remainder of wrath* (namely, the creature's wrath) *thou shalt restrain.* Did not God bound these crooks, howsoever sore they are in any one's case, they would be yet forer: But he says to the sinful instrument, as he said to the sea, *Hither shalt thou come, but no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed,* He lays a restraining band on him, that he cannot go one step farther, in the way his impetuous lust drives, than he sees meet to permit. Hence it comes to pass, that the crook of this kind is neither more nor less, but just as great as he by his powerful bounding makes it to be. An eminent instance hereof we have in the case of *Job*, whose lot was crooked through a particular agency of the devil: But, even to that grand sinner, God set a bound in the case. *The Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power, only upon himself put not forth thine hand,* Job i. 12. Now *Satan* went the full length of the bound, leaving nothing within the compass thereof untouched, which he saw could make for his purpose, ver. 18. 19. But he could by no means move one step beyond it, to carry his point which he could not gain within it. And therefore, to make the trial greater, and crook forer, nothing remained, but that the bound set

should be removed, and the sphere of his agency enlarged; for which cause he saith, *But touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face*, chap. ii. 5. And it being removed accordingly, but withal a new one set, *ver. 6 Behold, he is in thine hand, but save his life*; the crook was carried to the utmost that the new bound would permit, in a consistency with his design of bringing *Job* to blaspheme; *Satan smote him with sore boils, from the sole of his foot unto his crown*, *ver. 7*. And had it not been for this bound, securing *Job's* life, he, after finding this attempt successful too, had doubtless dispatched him for good and all.

Thirdly, He wisely over-rules them to some good purpose becoming the divine perfections. While the sinful instrument hath an ill design in the crook caused by him, God directs it to a holy and good end. In the disorders of *David's* family, *Amnon's* design was to gratify a brutish lust, *Absalom's* to glut himself with revenge, and to satisfy his pride and ambition: But God meant thereby to punish *David* for his sin in the matter of *Uriah*. In the crook made in *Job's* lot, by *Satan* and the *Sabeans* and *Chaldeans*, his instruments, *Satan's* design was to cause *Job* blaspheme, and theirs to gratify their covetousness: But God had another design therein, becoming himself, namely, to manifest *Job's* sincerity and uprightness. Did he not wisely and powerfully over-rule these crooks made in mens lot, no good could come out of them: But he always over-rules them so, as to fulfil his own holy purposes thereby, *howbeit the sinner meaneth not so*; for his designs cannot miscarry, *his counsel shall stand*, *Isa. xlvi. 10*. So the sinful crook is, by the over-ruling hand of God, turned about to his own glory, and his people's good, in the end; according to the word, *Prov. xvi. 4. The Lord made all things for himself. Rom. viii. 28. All things work together*

for good to them that love God. Thus Haman's plot for the destruction of the Jews, was turned to the contrary, Esth. ix. 1. And the crook made Joseph's lot, by his own brethren selling him into Egypt, tho' it was on their part most sinful, and of a most mischievous design; yet, as it was of God's making, by his holy permission, powerful bounding, and wise over-ruling of it, had an issue well becoming the divine wisdom and goodness: Both which Joseph noticeth to them, Gen. 1. 20. As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

THIRDLY, It remains to enquire, *Why* God makes a crook in one's lot. And this is to be cleared by discovering the *design* of that dispensation; a matter which it concerns every one to know and carefully to notice, in order to a Christian improvement of the crook in their lot, the *design* thereof seems to be, chiefly sevenfold.

First, The *trial* of one's *state*, whether one is in the state of grace, or not? Whether a sincere Christian, or a hypocrite? Though every affliction is trying, yet here, I conceive, lies the main providential trial a man is brought upon with reference to his *state*: Forasmuch as the crook in the lot, being a matter of continued course, one has occasion to open and shew himself again and again in the same thing; whence it comes to pass, that it ministers ground for a decision, in that momentous point. It was plainly on this bottom that the trial of *Job's* state was put. The question was, whether *Job* was an *upright* and sincere *servant of God*, as God himself testified of him; or, but a *mercenary* one, a hypocrite, as *Satan* alledged against him? and the trial hereof was put upon the *crook* to be made in his lot, *Job* i. 8.—12. and ii. 3—6. Accordingly that which all his friends, save *Elihu*

the last speaker, did, in their reasoning with him under his trial, aim at, was to prove him a hypocrite: *Satan* thus making use of these good men for gaining his point. As God took trial of *Israel* in the wilderness, for the land of *Canaan*, by a train of afflicting dispensations, the which *Caleb* and *Joshua* bearing strenuously, were declared meet to enter the promised land, as having followed the Lord fully; while others, being tired out with them, their carcases fell in the wilderness: So he takes trial of men, for heaven, by the crook in their lot. If one can stand the test, he is manifested to be a saint, a sincere servant of God, as *Job* was proven to be: If not, he is but a hypocrite; he cannot stand the test of the crook in his lot, but goes away like dross in God's furnace. A melancholy instance of which we have in that man of honour and wealth, who, with high pretences of religion, arising from a principle of moral seriousness, addressed himself to our Saviour, to know *what he should do, that he might inherit eternal life*, Mark. x. 17, 21. Our Saviour, to discover the man to himself, makes a crook in his lot, where all along before it had stood even, obliging him, by a probatory command, to sell and give away all he had, and follow him, ver. 21. *Sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor,—and come, take up the cross, and follow me.* Hereby he was, that moment, in the court of conscience, stript of his great possessions; so that thenceforth he could no longer keep them, with a good conscience, as he might have done before. The man instantly felt the smart of this crook made in his lot, *he was sad at that saying*, ver. 22. that is, immediately upon the hearing of it, being struck with pain, disorder, and confusion of mind, his countenance changed, became cloudy and lowering, as the same word is used, *Matth. xvi. 3.* He could not stand the test of that crook; he could

by no means submit his lot to God in *that* point, but behoved to have it, at any rate, *according to his own mind*. So he *went away* grieved, for he had *great possessions*. He went away from Christ back to his plentiful estate, and though with a pained and sorrowful heart, sat him down again on it, a *violent possessor* before the Lord, thwarting the divine order. And there is no appearance that ever this order was revoked, nor that ever he came to a better temper in reference thereunto.

Secondly, Excitation to duty, weaning one from this world, and prompting him to look after the happiness of the other world. Many have been beholden to the crook in their lot, for that ever they came to themselves, settled, and turned serious. Going for a time, like *a wild ass used to the wilderness*, scorning to be turned, their foot hath slide in due time; and a crook being thereby made in their lot, their *month* hath come wherein they have been caught, *Jer. ii. 24*. Thus was the prodigal brought to himself, and obliged to entertain thoughts of returning unto his father, *Luke xv. 17*. The crook in their lot convinces them at length that here is not their rest. Finding still a pricking thorn of uneasiness, whensoever they lay down their head, where they would fainest take rest in the creature, and that they are obliged to lift it again, they are brought to conclude, *there is no hope* from that quarter, and begin to cast about for rest another way. So it makes them errands to God, which they had not before; for as much as they feel a need of the comforts of the other world, to which their mouths were out of taste, while their lot stood even to their mind. Wherefore, whatever use we make of the crook in our lot, the voice of it is, *Arise ye, and depart, this is not your rest*. And it is surley that, which of all means of mortification of the afflictive kind, doth most deaden a real Christian to this life and world.

Thirdly, Conviction of sin. As when one walking heedlessly, is suddenly taken ill of a lameness: His going halting the rest of his way convinceth him of having made a wrong step; and every new painful step brings it afresh to his mind: So God makes a crook in one's lot, to convince him of some false step he hath made, or course he hath taken. What the sinner would otherways be apt to overlook, forget, or think light of, is, by this means, recalled to mind, set before him as an evil and bitter thing, and kept in remembrance, that his heart may every now and then bleed for it afresh. Thus, by the crook, mens *sin finds them out* to their conviction, *as the thief is ashamed when he is found*, Num. xxxii. 23. Jer. ii. 26. The which Joseph's brethren do feelingly express, under the crook made in their lot in *Egypt*, Gen. xliii. 21. *We are verily guilty concerning our brother*, chap. xlv. 16. *God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants*. The crook in the lot doth usually, in its nature or circumstances, so natively refer to the false step or course, that it serves for a providential memorial of it, bringing the sin, though of an old date, fresh to remembrance, and for a badge of the sinner's folly, in word or deed, to keep it ever before him. When *Jacob* found *Leah*, through *Laban's* unfair dealing, palmed upon him for *Rachel*, how could he miss of a stinging remembrance of the cheat he had, seven years at least before, put upon his own father, pretending himself to be *Esau*? Gen. xxvii. 19. How could it miss of galling him occasionally afterwards during the course of the marriage? He had imposed on his father the younger brother for the elder: And *Laban* imposed on him the eldest sister for the younger. The dimness of *Isaac's* eyes favoured the former cheat: And the darkness of the evening did as much favour the latter. So he behoved to say as *Adonibezek* in another case, Judg. i. 7. *As*

I have done, so God hath requited me. In like manner, *Rachel* dying in childbirth, could hardly evite a melancholy reflection on her rash and passionate expression, mentioned *Gen. xxx. 1. Give me children, or else I die.* Even holy *Job* read, in the crook of his lot, some false steps he had made in his youth, many years before, *Job xiii. 26. Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.*

Fourthly, Correction, or punishment for sin. In nothing more than in the crook of the lot is that word verified, *Jer. ii. 19. Thine own wickedness shall correct thee.* God may for a time wink at one's sin, which afterward he'll set a brand of his indignation upon in crooking the sinner's lot, as he did in the case of *Jacob* and of *Rachel*, mentioned before. Though the sin was a passing action, or a course of no long continuance, the mark of the divine displeasure for it, set on the sinner in the crook of his lot, may pain him long and fore, that by repeated experience he may know what an evil and bitter thing it was. *David's* killing *Uriah*, by the sword of the *Ammonites*, was soon over: But for that cause the sword never departed from his house, *2 Sam. xii. 10. Gehazi* quickly obtained two bags of money from *Naaman*, in the way of falshood and lying: But, as a lasting mark of the divine indignation against the profane trick, he got withal a leprosy which clave to him while he lived, and to his posterity after him, *2 Kings v. 27.* This may be the case, as well where the sin is pardoned, as to the guilt of eternal wrath, as where it is not. And one may have confessed and sincerely repented of that sin, which yet shall make him go halting to the grave, though it cannot carry him to hell. A man's person may be accepted in the Beloved who yet hath a particular badge of the divine displeasure with his sin hung upon him in the crook of his lot, *Psal. xcix.*

8. *Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance on their inventions.*

Fifthly, Preventing of sin, Hof. ii. 6. I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall that she shall not find her paths. The crook of the lot, will readily be found to ly cross to some wrong bias of the heart, which peculiarly sways with the party: So it is like a thorn-hedge or wall in the way which that bias inclines him to. The defiling objects in the world do specially take, and prove ensnaring, as they are suited to the particular cast of temper in men: But, by means of the crook in the lot, the paint and varnish is worn off the defiling object, whereby it loseth its former taking appearance: So the fuel being removed, the edge of corrupt affections is blunted, temptation weakened, and much sin prevented; the sinner after *gadding about so much to change his way*, returning *ashamed*, Jer. ii. 36, 37. Thus the Lord crooks one's lot, *that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man*: And so, *he keepeth back his soul from the pit*, Job xxxiii. 17, 18. Every one knows what is most pleasant to him, but God alone knows what is the most profitable. As *all men are liars*, so all men are fools too: He is the *only wise God*, Jude 25. Many are obliged to the crook in their lot, that they go not to these excesses, which their vain minds and corrupt affections would with full sail carry them to: And they would from their hearts bless God for making it, if they did but calmly consider what would most likely be the issue of the removal thereof. When one is in hazard of fretting under the hardship of bearing the crook; he would do well to consider what condition he is as yet in, for to bear its removal in a Christian manner.

Sixthly, Discovery of latent corruption, whether in saints or sinners. There are some corruptions in every man's heart, which ly, as it were, so near

the surface] that they are ready on every turn to cast up: But then there are others also which ly so very deep, that they are scarcely observed at all. But as the fire under the pot makes the scum to cast up, appear a-top and run over, so the crook in the lot raiseth up from the bottom, and brings out such corruption as otherwise one would hardly imagine to be within. Who would have suspected such strength of passion in the meek *Moses* as he discovered *at the waters of strife*, and for which he was kept out of *Canaan*, *Psal. cvi. 32, 33. Numb. xx. 13.* So much bitterness of spirit in the patient *Job*, as to charge God with *becoming cruel* to him, *Job xxx. 21.* So much ill nature in the good *Jeremiah*, as to *curse* not only the *day of his birth*, but even *the man who brought tidings of it to his father*, *Jer. xx. 14, 15.* Or, such a tang of Atheism in *Asaph*, as to pronounce religion a *vain thing*, *Psal. lxxiii. 13.* But the crook in the lot, bringing out these things, shewed them to have been within, how long soever they had lurked unobserved. And as this design, however indecently proud scoffers allow themselves to treat it, is in noways inconsistent with the divine perfections; so the discovery itself is necessary for the due humiliation of sinners, and to *stain the pride of all glory*, that men may know themselves. Both which appear, in that it was on this very design that God made the long continued crook in *Israel's* lot in the wilderness; even to *humble them and prove them, to know what was in their heart*, *Deut. viii. 2.*

Lastly, The exercise of grace in the children of God. Believers, through the remains of indwelling corruption, are liable to fits of spiritual laziness and inactivity, in which their graces ly dormant for the time. Besides there are some graces which, of their own nature, are but occasional in their exercises, as being exercised only upon occasion.

of certain things which they have a necessary relation to ; such as patience and long suffering. Now the crook in the lot, serves to rouse up a Christian to the exercise of the graces over-powered by corruption, and withal to call forth to action the occasional graces ministering proper occasions for them. The truth is, the crook in the lot is the great engine of providence for making men appear in their true colours, discovering both their ill and their good ; and if the grace of God be in them, it will bring it out, and cause it to display itself. It so puts the Christian to his shifts, that however it makes him stagger for a while, yet it will at length evidence both the reality and the strength of grace in him. *Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth— may be found unto praise,* 1 Pet. i. 6, 7. The crook in the lot gives rise to many acts of faith, hope, love, self-denial, resignation, and other graces ; to many heavenly breathings, pantings, longings, and groanings, which otherways would not be brought forth. And I make no question but these things, howsoever by carnal men despised as trifling, are more precious in the sight of God, than even believers themselves are aware of, being acts of immediate internal worship ; and will have a surprising notice taken of them, and of the sum of them, at long run, howbeit the persons themselves often can hardly think them worth their own notice at all. We know who hath said to the gracious soul, *Let me see thy countenance—thy countenance is comely,* Cant. ii. 14. *Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes,* chap. iv. 9. the steddying acting of a gallant army of horse and foot to the routing of the enemy, is highly prized ; but the acting of holy fear and humble hope, is in reality, far more valuable, as being so in the sight of God, whose judgment, we are sure, is according to

truth. This the *Pſalmiſt* teacheth, *Pſal.* cxlvii. 11. 12. *He delighteth not in the ſtrength of the horſe : He taketh not pleaſure in the legs of a man. The Lord taketh pleaſure in them that fear him, in thoſe that hope in his mercy.* And indeed the exerciſe of the graces of his Spirit in his people, is ſo very precious in his ſight, that whatever grace any of them do excel in, they will readily get ſuch a crook made in their lot, as will be a ſpecial trial for it, that will make a proof of its full ſtrength. *Abraham* excelled in the grace of faith, in truſting God's bare word of promiſe, over the belly of ſenſe : And God giving him a promiſe, that *he would make of him a great nation*, made withal a crook in his lot, by which he had enough ado with all the ſtrength of his faith ; while he was obliged for good and all to leave his country and kindred, and ſojourn among the *Canaanites* ; his wife continuing barren, till paſt the age of child-bearing ; and when ſhe had at length brought forth *Iſaac*, and he was grown up, he was called to offer him up for a burnt-offering, the more exquisite trial of his faith, that *Iſhmael* was now expelled his family, and that it was declared that in *Iſaac* only *his ſeed ſhould be called*, *Gen.* xxi. 12. *Moses* was very meek, above all the men that were upon the face of the earth, *Numb.* xii. 3. And he was intruſted with the conduct of a moſt perverſe and unmanageable people, the crook in his lot plainly deſigned for the exerciſe of his meekneſs. *Job* excelled in patience, and by the crook in his lot he got as much to do with it. For God gives none of his people to excel in a gift, but ſome one time or other he'll afford them uſe for the whole compaſs of it.

Now the uſe of this doctrine is threefold. (1.) For reproof. (2.) For conſolation. And, (3.) For exhortation.

Use 1. Of reproof. And it meets with three sorts of persons as reproveable.

First, The carnal and earthly, who do not with awe and reverence regard the crook in their lot as of God's making. There is certainly a signature of the divine hand upon it, to be perceived by just observers: And that challengeth an awful regard, the neglect of which forbodes destruction, *Psal. xxviii. 5. Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, thou shalt destroy them, and not build them up.* And herein they are deeply guilty, who poring upon second causes, and looking no farther than the unhappy instruments of the crook in their lot, overlook the first cause; as a dog snarles at the stone, but looks not to the hand that cast it. This is, in effect, to make a God of the creature: So regarding it, as if it could of itself effectuate any thing, while, in the mean time, it is but an instrument in the hand of God, the rod of his anger, *Iſa. x. 5. ordained of him for judgment, established for correction,* *Hab. i. 12.* O! why should men terminate their view on the instruments of the crook in their lot, and so magnify their scourges! The truth is, they are, for the most part, rather to be pitied, as having an undesirable office, which, for their gratifying their own corrupt affections, in making the crook in the lot of others, returns on their own head with a vengeance, as did the blood of *Jezreel* on the house of *Jehu*, *Hos. i. 4.* And it is specially undesirable to be so employed in the case of such as belong to God; for rarely is the ground of the quarrel the same on the part of the instrument as on God's part, but very different: Witness *Shimei's* cursing *David* as a bloody man, meaning the blood of the house of *Saul*, which he was not guilty of, while God meant it of the blood of *Uriah*, which he could not deny, *2 Sam. xvi. 7, 8.* Moreover, the quarrel will be,

at long-run, taken up between God and his people ; and then their scourgers will find they had but a thankless office, *Zech. i. 15. I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction*, saith God in resentment of the heathens crooking the lot of his people. In like manner they are guilty, who impute the crook in their lot to *fortune* or their *ill luck*, which, in very deed, is nothing but a creature of imagination, framed for a blind to keep men from acknowledging the hand of God. Thus, what the *Philistines* doubted, they do more impiously determine, saying, in effect, *It is not his hand that smote us, it was a chance that happened us*, *1 Sam. vi. 9.* And, finally, these also, who, in the way of giving up themselves to carnal mirth and sensuality, set themselves to despise the crook in their lot, to make nothing of it, and to forget it. I question not, but one committing his case to the Lord, and looking to him for remedy in the first place, may lawfully call in the moderate use of the comforts of life for help in the second place. But as for that course, so frequent and usual in this case among carnal men, if the crook of the lot really be, as indeed it is, of God's making, it must needs be a most undecent unbecoming course, to be abhorred by all good men, *Prov. iii. 11. My son despise not the chastening of the Lord.* It is surely a very desperate method of cure, which cannot miss of issuing in something worse than the disease, however it may palliate it for a while, *Isa. xxii. 12, 13, 14. In that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping and to mourning—and behold joy and gladness—eating flesh, and drinking wine—And it was revealed in mine ears, by the Lord of hosts, surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die.*

Secondly, The *unsubmissive*, whose hearts, like the troubled sea, swell and boil, fret and murmur, and cannot be at rest under the crook in their lot.

This is a most sinful and dangerous course. The Apostle *Jude*, characterizing some, *to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever*, ver. 13. faith of them, ver. 16. *These are murmurers, complainers*, namely, still complaining of their lot, which is the import of the word there used by the Holy Ghost. For, since the crook in their lot, which their unsubdued spirits can by no means submit to, is of God's *making*, this their practice must needs be a fighting against God, and these their complainings and murmurings are indeed against *him*, whatever face they put upon them. Thus, when the *Israelites murmured against Moses*, Numb. xiv. 2. God charges them with murmuring against himself. *How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmured against me*, ver. 27. Ah! may not he, who made and fashioned us without our advice, be allowed to make our lot too without asking our mind, but we must rise up against him on account of the crook made in it! What doth this speak, but that the proud creature cannot endure God's work, nor digest what *he* hath done? And how black and dangerous is that temper of spirit? How is it possible to miss of being broken to pieces in such a course? *He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: Who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?* Job ix. 4.

Lastly, The *careless* and *unfruitful*, who do not set themselves dutifully to comply with the design of the crook in their lot. God and nature do nothing in vain. Since *he* makes the crook, there is, doubtless, a becoming design in it, which we are obliged in duty to fall in with, according to that, *Micah vi. 9, Hear ye the rod.* And indeed, if one shut not his own eyes, but be willing to understand, he may easily perceive the general design thereof to be, to wean him from this world, and move him to seek and take up his *heart's rest* in God. And the

nature and circumstances of the crook itself being duly considered, it will not be very hard to make a more particular discovery of the design thereof. But, alas! the careless sinner, sunk in sloth and stupidity, is in no concern to discover the design of providence in the crook: So he cannot fall in with it, but remains unfruitful; and all the pains taken on him, by the great husbandman, in the dispensation, are lost. *They cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty*, groaning under the pressure of the crook itself, and the weight of the hand of the instrument thereof: *But none saith, where is God my maker*, they look not, they turn not unto God for all that, *Job xxxv. 9. 10.*

Use II. Of Consolation. It speaks comfort to the afflicted children of God. Whatever is the crook in your lot, it is of God's making: And therefore you may look upon it kindly. Since it is your *Father* has made it for you, question not but there is a favourable design in it towards you. A discreet child welcometh his father's rod, knowing that, being a father, he seeks his benefit thereby: And shall not God's children welcome the crook in their lot, as designed by their father, who cannot mistake his measures to work for their *good*, according to the promise? The truth is, the crook in the lot of a believer, how painful soever it proves, is a part of the discipline of the covenant, the nurture secured by the promise of the Father to Christ's children, *Psal. lxxxix. 30, 32. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments—Then will I visit their transgressions with the rod.* Farthermore, all who are disposed to betake themselves to God, under the crook in their lot, may take comfort in this. Let them know that there is no crook in their lot, but may be made straight: For God made it, surely then he can mend it. He himself can *make straight* what he hath *made crooked*, tho'

none other can, There is nothing too hard for him to do. *He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dung-hill: That he may set him with princes. He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children,* Psal. cxiii. 7, 8, 9. Say not that your crook hath been of so long continuance, that it will never mend. Put it in the hand of God, who made it, that he may mend it, and wait on him: And if it be for thy good, that it should be mended, it shall be mended, *for no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly,* Psal. lxxxiv. 11.

Use last. Of Exhortation. Since the crook in the lot is of God's making, then, eyeing the hand of God in yours, be reconciled to it, and submit under it, whatever it is. I say, *eyeing the hand of God in it;* For otherwise your submission, under the crook in your lot, cannot be a *Christian* submission, acceptable to God, having no reference to him as your party in the matter.

OBJECT. 1. But some will say, *The crook in my lot is from the hand of the creature; and such a one too as I deserved no such treatment from.*

ANS. From what has been already said, it appears, that although the crook in thy lot be indeed immediately from the creature's hand, yet it is mediately from the hand of God; there being nothing of that kind, no penal evil, but *the Lord hath done it.* Therefore, without all peradventure, God himself is thy principal party, whoever be the less principal. And albeit thou hast not deserved thy crook at the hand of the instrument or instruments which he makes use of for thy correction, thou certainly deservest it at *his* hand, and he may make use of what instrument he will in the matter, or may do it immediately by himself, even as seems good in his sight.

OBJECT. 2. *But the crook in my lot might quick-*

ly be evened, if the instrument or instruments thereof pleased; only there is no dealing with them, so as to convince them of their fault in making it.

ANS. If it is so, be sure God's time is not as yet come that the crook should be evened: For if it were come, though they stand now like an impregnable fort, they would give way like a sandy bank under one's feet; they should *bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet*, Isa. xlix. 23. Mean while, that state of the matter is so far from justifying one's not eyeing the hand of God in the crook in the lot, that it makes a piece of trial, in which his hand very eminently appears; namely, that men should be signally injurious and burdensome to others, yet by no means susceptible of conviction. This was the trial of the church from her adversaries, *Jer. l. 7. All that found them have devoured them; and their adversaries said, we offend not, because they have sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice.* They were very abusive, and gave her barbarous usage; yet would they take with no fault in the matter. How could they ward off the conviction? Were they very blameless in their devouring the Lord's straying sheep? No, sure they were not. Did they look upon themselves as ministers of the divine justice against her? No they did not. Some indeed would make a question here, How the adversaries of the church could celebrate her God as the *habitation of justice*? But the original pointing of the text being retained, it appears that there is no ground at all for this question here, and withal, the whole matter is set in a clear light. *All that found them have devoured them; and their adversaries said, we offend not; because they have sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice.* These last are not the words of the adversaries, but the words of the Prophet, shewing how it came to pass that

the adversaries devoured the Lord's sheep as they lighted on them, and withal stood to the defence of it, when they had done, far from acknowledging any wrong; the matter lay here, the sheep had sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice, and, as a just punishment hereof from *his* hand, they could have no justice at the hand of their adversaries.

Wherefore, laying aside these frivolous pretences, and eyeing the hand of God, as that which hath bowed your lot in that part, and keeps it in the bow, be reconciled to, and submit under the crook whatever it is, saying from the heart, *Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it*, Jer. x. 17.

And, to move you hereunto, consider, (1.) It is a duty you owe to God, as your sovereign Lord and benefactor. His *sovereignty* challengeth our submission; and it can in no case be meanness of spirit to submit unto the crook which *his* hand hath made in our lot, and to go quietly under the yoke that *he* hath laid on: But it is really madness for the potsherds of the earth, by their turbulent and refractory carriage under it, to strive with their Maker. And his *beneficence* to us ill deserving creatures, may well stop our mouths from complaining of *his* making a crook in our lot, who had done us no wrong had he made the whole of it crooked. *Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?* Job ii. 10. (2.) It is an unalterable state, for the time of this life, that nobody shall want a crook in their lot; for *man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward*, Job v. 7. And those who are designed for heaven, are in a special manner assured of a crook in theirs, that *in the world they shall have tribulation*, John xvi. 33. for by means thereof the Lord makes them meet for heaven. And how can you imagine that you shall be exempted from the common lot of man.

kind! *Shall the rock be removed out of his place for thee?* And since God makes the crooks in mens lot, according to the different exigence of their cases, you may be sure that yours is necessary for you. (3.) A crook in the lot, which one can by no means submit to, makes a condition of all things likest to that in hell. For there is a yoke, which the wretched sufferers can neither bear nor yet shake off, is wreathed about their necks: There the almighty arm draws against them, and they against it: There they are ever suffering and ever sinning; still in the furnace, but their dross not consumed, nor they purified. Even such is the case of those who now cannot submit under the crook in their lot. *Lastly,* Great is the loss by not submitting under it. The crook in the lot, rightly improven, hath turned to the best account, and made the best time to some that ever they had all their life long, as the Psalmist from his own experience testifies, *Psal. cxix. 67. Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word.* There are many now in heaven, who are blessing God for the crook they had in their lot here. What a sad thing must it then be to lose this teeth-wind for *Immanuel's* land? But if the crook in thy lot do thee no good, be sure it will not miss of doing the great damage; it will hugely increase guilt, and aggravate thy condemnation, while it shall for ever cut to the heart, to think of the pains taken on thee, by means of the crook in the lot, to wean thee from the world, and bring thee to God, but all in vain. Take heed, therefore, how you manage it, *Lest—thou mourn at the last—and say, how have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof?* Prov. v. 10, 11, 12.

Doct. II. *What God sees meet to mar, we will not be able mend in our lot. What crook God makes in our lot, we will not be able to even.*

We shall, 1st, shew God's marring and making a crook in one's lot, as he sees meet.

2^{dly}, We shall consider mens attempting to mend or even that crook in their lot.

3^{dly}, In what sense it is to be understood, that we will not be able to mend or even the crook in our lot.

4^{thly}, Render some reasons of the point.

I. As to the first head, namely, &c.

First, God keeps the choice of every one's crook to himself; and therein he exerts his sovereignty, *Matth. xx. 15.* It is not left to our option what that crook shall be, or what our peculiar burden: But, as the potter makes of the same clay one vessel for one use, another for another use; so God makes one crook for one, another for another, according to his own will and pleasure, *Psal. cxxxv. 6. Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven and in earth, &c.*

Secondly, He sees and observes the bias of every one's will and inclination how it lies, and wherein it especially bends away from himself, and consequently wherein it needs the special bow; so he did in that man's case, *Mark x. 21. One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give it to the poor, &c.* Observe the bent of his heart to his great possessions. He takes notice what is that idol that in every one's case is most apt to be his rival, that so he may suit the trial to the case, making the crook there.

Thirdly, By the conduct of his providence, or a touch of his hand, he gives that part of one's lot

a bow the contrary way ; so that henceforth it lies quite contray to that bias of the party's will, *Ezek. xxiv. 25.* And here the trial is made, the bent of the will lying one way, and that part of one's lot another, that it does not answer the inclination of the party, but thwarts with it.

Lastly, He wills that crook in the lot to remain while he sees meet, for longer or shorter time, just according to his own holy ends he designs it for, *2 Sam. xii. 10. Hos. v. 15.* By that will it is so fixed, that the whole creation cannot alter it, or put it out of the bow.

II. We shall consider mens attempting to mend or even that crook in their lot. This, in a word, lies in their making efforts to bring their lot in that point to their own will, that they may both go one way ; so it imports three things.

First, A certain uneasiness under the crook in the lot ; it is a yoke which is hard for the party to bear, till his spirit be tamed and subdued, *Jer. xxxi. 18.—Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke : Turn thou me, and I shall be turned, &c.* And it is for the breaking down of the weight of one's spirit that God lays it on ; for which cause it is declared to be a good thing to bear it, *Lam. iii. 27.* that being the way to make one at length as a weaned child.

Secondly, A strong desire to have the cross removed, and to have matters in that part going according to our inclinations. This is very natural, nature desiring to be freed from every thing that is burdensome or cross to it ; and if that desire be kept in a due subordination to the will of God, and be not too peremptory, it is not sinful, *Matth. xxvi. 39. If it be possible, let this cup pass from me ; nevertheless, not as I will, &c.* Hence so many accepted

prayers of the people of God for removal of the crook in their lot.

Lastly, An earnest use of means for that end. This natively follows on that desire. The man, being pressed with the cross which is in his crook, labours all he can in the use of means to be rid of it. And if the means used be lawful, and not relied upon, but followed with an eye to God in them, the attempt is not sinful either, whether he succeed in the use of them or not.

III In what sense it is to be understood, that we will not be able to mend or even the crook in our lot?

Negatively, It is not to be understood, as if the case were absolutely hopeless, and that there is no remedy for the crook in the lot. For there is no case so desperate but God may right it, *Gen. xviii. 14. Is any thing too hard for the Lord?* When the crook has continued long, and spurned all remedies one has used for it, one is ready to lose hope about it; but many a crook, given over for hopeless that would never mend, God has made perfectly straight; as in *Job's* case. But,

Positively, We will never be able to mend it by ourselves; if the Lord himself take it not in hand to remove it, it will stand before us immovable, like a mountain of brass, though perhaps it may be in itself a thing that might easily be removed. We take it up in these three things.

(1.) It will never do by the main force of our hand, *1 Sam. ii. 9.—For by strength shall no man prevail.* The most vigorous endeavours we can use will not even the crook, if God give it not a touch of his hand; so that all endeavours that way without an eye to God, are vain and fruitless, and will be but plowing on the rock, *Psal. cxxvii. 1, 2.*

(2.) The use of all allowable means for it will

be successful, unless the Lord bless them for that end, *Lam. iii. 37. Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?* As one may eat and not be satisfied, so one may use means proper for evening the crook in his lot, and yet prevail nothing; for nothing can be or do for us any more than God makes it to be or do, *Eccl. ix. 11. — The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, &c.*

(3.) It will never do in our time, but in God's time, which seldom is so early as ours, *John vii. 6. — My time is not yet come; but your time is always ready* Hence that crook remains sometimes immoveable as if it were kept by an invisible hand, and at another time it goes away with a touch, because God's time is come for evening it.

IV. Reasons of the point.

First, Because of the absolute dependance we have upon God, *Acts xvii. 28.* As the light depends on the sun, or the shadow on the body, so we depend on God, and without him can do nothing, great or small. And God will have us to find it so, to teach us our dependance.

Secondly. Because his will is irresistible, *Isa. xlv. 10. — My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.* When God wills one thing, and the creature the contrary, it is easy to see which will must be done. When the omnipotent arm holds, in vain does the creature draw, *Job ix. 4. — Who hath hardened himself against him and prospered?*

Inference 1. There is a necessity of yeilding and submitting under the crook in our lot; for we may as well think to remove the rocks and mountains, which God has settled, as to make that part of our lot straight which he hath crooked.

2. The evening of the crook in our lot, by main force of our own, is but a cheat we put on our-

ſelves, and will not laſt, but, like a ſtick by main force made ſtraight, it will quickly return to the bow again.

Laſtly, The only habile way of getting the crook evened, is to apply to God for it.

Exhortation 1. Let us then apply to God for removing any crook in our lot, that in the ſettled order of things may be removed. Men cannot ceaſe to deſire the removal of a crook, more than that of a thorn in the fleſh: But, ſince we are not able to mend what God ſees meet to mar, it is evident we are to apply to him that made it to amend it, and not take the evening of it in our hand.

Motive 1. All our attempts for its removal will, without him, be vain and fruitleſs, *Pſal. cxxvii. 1.* Let us be as reſolute as we will to have it evened, if God ſay it not, we will labour in vain, *Lam. iii. 37.* Howſoever fair the means we uſe bid for it, they will be ineffectual if he command not the bleſſing, *Eccl. ix. 11.*

2. Such attempts will readily make it worſe. Nothing is more ordinary, than for a proud ſpirit, ſtriving with the crook, to make it more crooked, *Eccl. x. 8, 9.*—*Whoſo breaketh a hedge, a ſerpent ſhall bite him. Ver. 9 Whoſo removeth ſtones, ſhall be hurt therewith, &c.* This is evident in the caſe of the murmurers in the wilderneſs. It native-ly comes to be ſo; becauſe, at that rate, the will of the party bends farther away from it; and moreover God is provoked to wreathe the yoke the faſter about one's neck, that he will by no means let it fit eaſy on him.

3. There is no crook but what may be remedied by him, and made perfectly ſtraight, *Pſal. cxlvi. 8.*—*The Lord raiſeth them that are bowed down, &c.* He can raiſe the oldeſt ſit-ſt, concerning which there remains no hope with us, *Rom. iv. 17.*—*Who quickeneth the dead, and calleth thoſe things which be*

not as though they were. It is his prerogative to do wonders ; to begin a work, where the whole creation gives it over as hopeless, and carry it on to perfection, *Gen. xviii. 14.*

4. He loves to be employed in evening crooks, and calls us to employ him that way, *Psal. l. 15.* — *Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, &c.* He makes them for that very end, that he may bring us to him on that errand, and may manifest his power and goodness in evening of them, *Hos. v. 15.* The straits of the children of men afford a large field for displaying his glorious perfections, which otherwise would be wanting, *Exod. xv. 11.*

5. A crook thus got evened is a double mercy. There are some crooks evened by a touch of the hand of common providence, while people are either not exercised about them, or when they fret for their removal : These are senseless mercies, and short-liv'd, *Psal. xxviii. 30, 31.* *Hos. xii. 11.* Fruits thus too hastily plucked off the tree of providence can hardly miss to set the teeth on edge, and will certainly be bitter to gracious souls. But, O the sweet of the evening of a crook got by a humble application to, and waiting on the Lord ! It has the image and superscription of divine favour upon it, which makes it bulky and valuable, *Gen. xxxiii. 10.* — *For therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, &c. chap. xxi. 6.*

6. God has signalized his favour to his dearest children, in making and mending notable crooks in their lot. His darling ones ordinarily have the greatest crooks made in their lot, *Heb. xii. 6.* But then they make way for the richest experiences in the removal of them, upon their application to him. This is clear from the case of *Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph.* Which of the Patriarchs had so great crooks as they ? but which of them, on the other hand,

had so signal tokens of the divine favour? The greatest of men, as *Sampson* and the *Baptist*, have been born of women naturally barren; so do the greatest crooks issue in the richest mercies to them that are exercised thereby.

Lastly, It is the shortest and surest way to go straight to God with the crook in the lot. If we would have our wish in that point, we must, as the eagle, first soar aloft, and then come down on the prey, *Mark* v. 36. Our faithless out-of-the way attempts to even the crook, are our fool's haste that is no speed; as in the case of *Abraham's* going in to *Hagar*. God is the first mover who sets all the wheels in motion for evening the crook, the which, without him, will remain immoveable, *Hos.* ii. 21, 22.

OBJECT. 1. *But it is needless, for I see, that though the crook in my lot may mend, yet I will never mend. In its own nature it is capable of being removed, but it is plain, it is not to be removed, it is hopeless.*

ANS. That is the language of unbelieving haste, which faith and patience should correct, *Psal.* cxvi. 11, 12. *Abraham* had as much to say for the hopelessness of his crook, but yet he applies to God in faith for the mending of it, *Rom.* iv. 19, 20. *Sarah* had made such a conclusion, for which she was rebuked, *Gen.* xviii. 13, 14. Nothing can make it needless in such a case to apply to God.

OBJECT. 2. *But I have applied to him again and again for it, yet it is never mended.*

ANS. Delays are not denials of suits at the court of heaven, but trials of the faith and patience of the petitioners. And whoso will hang on, will certainly come speed at long-run, *Luke* xviii. 7, 8, 31. *And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?* ver. 8. *I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.*

Sometimes indeed folks grow pettish, in the case of the crook in the lot, and let it drop out in their prayers, in a course of despondency, while it yet continues uneasy to them; but, if God mind to even it in mercy, he will oblige them to take in it again unto them, *Ezek. xxxvi. 27.*—*I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them, &c.* If the removal come, while it is dropt, there will be little foyson in it; though it were never to be removed while we live, that should not cut off our applying to God for the removal; for there are many prayers not to be answered till we come to the other world, and there all will be answered at once, *Rom. vii. 24.*

DIRECTIONS for right managing the application for removing the crook in the lot.

1. Pray for it, *Ezek. xxxvi. 37.* and pray in faith, believing that, for the sake of Jesus, you shall certainly obtain at length, and in this life too, if it is good for you; but without peradventure in the other life, *Matth. xxi. 22.* They will not be disappointed that get the song of *Moses* and of the Lamb, *Rev. xv. 3.* And in some cases of that nature extraordinary prayer with fasting is very expedient, *Matth. xvii. 21.*

2. Humble yourselves under it, as the yoke which the sovereign hand has laid on you, *Mic. vii. 9.* *I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, &c.* Justify God, condemn yourselves, kiss the rod, and go quietly under it, this is the most feasible way to get rid of it, *James iv. 10.* When the bullock is broken and tamed, as accustomed to the yoke, then it is taken off, the end being obtained, *Psal. x. 17.*—*Thou wilt prepare their hearts, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear.*

Lastly, Wait on patiently till the hand that made it, mend it, *Psal.* xxi. 14. Do not give up the matter as hopeless, because you are not so soon relieved as you would; *but let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing*, *Jam.* i. 4. Leave the timing of the deliverance to the Lord; his time will at length, to conviction, appear the best, and it will not go beyond it, *Isa.* lx. 22.—*I the Lord will hasten it in his time*; waiting on him, you will not be disappointed—for *they shall not be ashamed that wait for me*, *Isa.* xlv. 23.

Exhortation 2. What crook there is, that, in the settled order of things cannot be removed or evened in this world, let us apply to God for suitable relief under it. For instance, the common crook in the lot of saints, *viz.* indwelling sin; as God has made that crook not to be removed here, he can certainly ballance it, and afford relief under it. The same is to be said of any crook, while it remains unremoved. In both cases apply yourself to God, for making up your losses another way. And there are five things I would have you to keep in view, and aim at here.

1. To take God in Christ, for and instead of that thing, the with-holding or taking away of which from you makes the crook in your lot, *Psal.* cxliii. 4, 5. There is never a crook God makes in our lot, but it is in effect heaven's offer of a blest exchange to us, such as, *Mark* x. 21.—*Sell whatsoever thou hast—and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.* In managing of which exchange, God first puts out his hand, and takes away some earthly thing from us; and it is expected we put out our hand next, and take some heavenly thing from him in the stead of it, and particularly his Christ. Wherefore has God emptied his left-hand of such and such an earthly comfort? stretch out your right-

hand to a God in Christ, take him in the room of it, and welcome. Therefore the soul's closing with Christ is called buying, wherein, parting with one thing, we get another in its stead, *Matth. xiii. 45, 46.*—*The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls: Ver. 46. Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.* Do this and you will be more than even hands with the crook in your lot.

2. Look for the stream's running as full from him, as ever it did or could run, when the crook of the lot has dried it. This is the work of faith, confidently to hang on for that from God which is denied us from the creature. *When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up, Psal. xxvii. 10.* This is a most rational expectation: For it is certain there is no good in the creature, but what is from God; therefore there is no good to be found in the creature, the stream, but what may be got immediately from God the fountain. And, O! but it is a welcome plea, to come to God, and say, Now, Lord, thou hast taken away from me such a creature comfort, I must have as good from thyself.

3. The spiritual fruits of the crook in the lot, *Heb. xii. 11.* We see the way in the world is, when one trade fails, to fall on and drive another trade; so should we, when there is a crook in the lot, making our earthly comforts low, set ourselves the more for spiritual attainments. If our trade with the world sinks, let us see to drive a trade with heaven more vigorously: See if, by means of the crook, we can reach more faith, love, heavenly-mindedness, contempt of the world, humility, self-denial, &c. *2 Cor. vi. 10.* So, while we lose at one hand, we will gain at another.

4. Grace to carry us under the crook, *2 Cor. 8, 9.* *For this thing I besought the Lord thrice,*

—ver. 9. *And he said, My grace is sufficient for thee.* Whether a man be faint and have a light burden, or be refreshed and strengthened, and have a heavy one, it is all a case, the latter can go as easy under his burden, as the former under his. Grace proportioned to the trial is what we should aim at; getting that, though the crook be not evened, we are even hands with it.

Lastly, The keeping in our eye the eternal rest and weight of glory in the other world, 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. *For our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory: while we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen.* This will balance the crook in your lot, be it what it will; while they, who have no well-grounded hope of salvation, will find the crook in their lot in this world such a weight, as they have nothing to counterbalance it; yet the hope of eternal rest may bear up under all the toil and labour met with here.

Exhortation 3. Let us then set ourselves rightly to bear and carry under the crook in our lot, while God sees meet to continue it. What we cannot mend, let us bear christianly, and not fight against God, and so kick against the pricks. So let us bear it.

1. Patiently, without firing and fretting, or murmuring, *Jam. v. 7. Psal. xxxvii. 7.* Though we lose our comfort in the creature, through the crook in our lot, let us not lose the possession of ourselves, *Luke xxi. 19.* The crook in our lot makes us like one who has but a scanty coldfire to warm at; but impatience under it, scatters it, so as to set the house in fire about us, that exposeth us, *Prov. xv. 28. He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down and without walls.*

2. With Christian fortitude, without sinking un-

hand to a God in Christ, take him in the room of it, and welcome. Therefore the soul's closing with Christ is called buying, wherein, parting with one thing, we get another in its stead, *Matth. xiii. 45, 46.*—*The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls: Ver. 46. Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.* Do this and you will be more than even hands with the crook in your lot.

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2. With Christian fortitude, without sinking un-

der discouragement—*nor faint when thou art rebuked of him*, Heb. xii. 5. Satan's work is, by the crook, either to bend or break peoples spirits, and oftentimes by bending to break them: Our work is to carry evenly under it, steering a middle course, guarding against splitting on the rocks on either hand. Our happiness lies not in any earthly comfort, nor will the want of any of them render us miserable, *Hab. iii. 17, 18.* So that we are resolutely to hold on our way, with a holy contempt and regardlessness of the hardships, *Job xvii. 9. The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.*

Quest. When is one to be reckoned to fall under linking discouragement from the crook in his lot?

Ans. When it prevails so far as to unfit for the duties either of our particular or Christian calling. We may be sure it has carried us beyond the bounds of moderate grief, when it unfits us for the common affairs of life, which the Lord calls us to manage, *1 Cor. vii. 24.* See what is recorded in the commendation of *Abraham*, Gen. xxiii. 3, 4. Or for the duties of religion, hindering them altogether, *1 Pet. iii. 7.*—*that your prayers be not hindered, Greek, cut off, or up, like a tree from the roots,* or making one quite hopeless in them, *Mal. ii. 13.*

Lastly, Profitably, so as we may gain some advantage thereby, *Psal. cxix. 71. It is good for me that I have been afflicted: That I might learn thy statutes.* There is an advantage to be made thereby, *Rom. v. 3, 4, 5.* and it is certainly an ill managed crook in our lot when we get not some spiritual good of it, *Heb. xii. 11.* The crook is a kind of spiritual medicine; and as it is lost physic that purges away no ill humours, but in vain are its unpleasantness to the taste and its grippings endured; so it is a lost crook, and ill is the bitterness of it

ware that we are not bettered by, *Isa. xxvii. 9.* By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin.

Motives to press this exhortation. Consider,

1. There will be no evening of it while God sees meet to continue it. Let us carry under it as we will, and make what fallies we please in the case, it will continue immoveable, as fixed with bands of iron and brasse, *Job xxiii. 13, 14.* But he is of one mind, and who can turn him? And what his soul desireth, even that he doth. For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: And many such things are with him. Is it not wisdom then to make the best we may of what we cannot mend? Make a virtue then of necessity. What is not to be cured must be endured, and should with a Christian resignation.

2. An aukward carriage under it notably increases the pain of it. What makes a yoke gall our necks, but that we struggle so much against it, and cannot let it sit at ease on us, *Jer. xxxi. 18.* How often are we in that case, like men dashing their heads against a rock to remove it? The rock stands unmoved, but they are wounded, and lose exceedingly by their struggle. Impatience under the crook lays an overweight on the burden, and makes it heavier, while withal it weakens us, and makes us less able to bear.

3. The crook in thy lot is the special trial God has chosen for thee to take thy measure by, *1 Pet. i. 6, 7.* It is God's fire, whereby he tries what metal men are of; heaven's touch stone for discovering of true and counterfeit Christians. They may bear and go through several trials, whom the crook in the lot will discover to be naught, because by no means they can bear that, *Mark x. 21, 22.* Think then with thyself under it. Now, here the trial of my state turns; I must, by this, be proven

either sincere or a hypocrite. For, (1.) Can any be a cordial subject of Christ, without being able to submit his lot to him? Do not all who sincerely come to Christ put a blank in his hand, *Acts ix. 6. Psal. xlvii. 4.* And does he not tell us, that without that disposition we are not disciples, *Luke xiv. 26. If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters; yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.* Perhaps you find you can submit to any thing but that; But will that but mar all? *Mark x. 21.* Did ever any hear of a sincere closing with Christ, with a reserve or exception of one thing, wherein they behoved to be their own lords?

Quest. Is that disposition then a qualification necessarily pre-required to our believing? And if so, where must we have it? Can we work it out of our natural powers? *Ans.* No, it is not so; but it necessarily accompanies and goes along with believing, flowing from the same saving illumination in the knowledge of Christ, whereby the soul is brought to believe on him. Hereby the soul sees him an able Saviour, so trusts on him for salvation; the rightful Lord, and infinitely wise ruler, and so submits the lot to him, *Matth. xiii. 45, 46.* The soul taking him for a Saviour, takes him also for a head and ruler. It is Christ's giving himself to us, and our receiving him, that causes us quit other things to and for him; as it is the light dispels the darkness. *Case.* Alas! I cannot get my heart freely to submit my lot to him in that point. *Ans.* That submission will not be carried on in any without a struggle; the old man will never submit it, and when the new man of grace is submitting it, the old man will still be reclaiming, *Gal. v. 17. For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one*

to the other ; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But are ye sincerely desirous, and habitually aiming to submit it ? Do ye, from the ungracious struggle against the crook, turn away to the struggle with your own heart to bring it to submit, believing the promise, and using the means for it, being grieved from the heart with yourselves that ye cannot submit it ? This is submitting of your lot, in the favourable construction of the gospel, *Rom. vii. 17,—20. 2 Cor. viii. 12.* If ye had your choice, would ye rather have your heart brought to submit to the crook, than the crook evened to your hearts desire ? *Rom. vii. 22, 23.* And do ye not sincerely endeavour to submit it over the belly of the reluctance of flesh ? *Gal. v. 17.*

2. Where is the Christian self-denial, and taking up of the cross, without submitting to the crook ? This is the first lesson Christ puts in the hand of his disciples, *Matth. xiv. 24.*—*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.* Self-denial would procure a reconciliation with the crook, and an admittance of the cross : But, while we cannot bear our corrupt self to be denied any of its cravings, and particularly that which God sees meet especially to be denied it, we cannot bear the crook in our lot, but fight against it in favour of self.

3. Where is our conformity to Christ, while we cannot submit to the crook ? We cannot evidence ourselves Christians without conformity to Christ. *He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk even as he walked, 1 John ii. 6.* There was a continued crook in Christ's lot, but he submitted to it, *Philip. ii. 8.* *And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Rom. xv. 3.* *For even Christ pleased not himself, &c.* And so must we,

if we will prove ourselves Christians indeed. *Matth.* ix. 29. 2 *Tim.* ii. 11, 12.

4. How will we prove ourselves the genuine kindly children of God, if still warring with the crook? We cannot pray, *Our Father—Thy will be done in earth*, &c. *Matth.* vi. Nay the language of that practice is, we must have our own will, and God's will cannot satisfy us.

Motive 4. The trial by the crook here will not last long, 1 *Cor.* vii. 31. What though the work be sore, it may be the better comported with, that it will not be longsome: A few days or years at farthest will put an end to it, and take you off your trials. Do not say, I will never be eased of it; for if ye be not eased before, ye will be eased of it at death, come in the room of it after what will. A serious view of death and eternity might make us to set ourselves to carry rightly under our crook while it lasteth.

5. If ye would, in a Christian manner, set yourselves to bear the crook, ye would find it easier than ye imagine, *Matth.* xi. 29, 30. *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me—and ye shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.* Satan has no readier way to gain his purpose, than to persuade men it is impossible that ever their minds should ply with the crook; that it is a burden to them altogether insupportable: As long as ye believe that, be sure ye will never be able to bear it. But the Lord makes no crook in the lot of any, but what may be so born of them acceptably, though not sinlessly and perfectly, *Matth.* xi. 30. For there is strength for that effect secured in the covenant, 2 *Cor.* iii. 5. *Phillip.* iv. 13. and being by faith fetched, it will certainly come, *Psal.* xxviii. 7.

6. If ye carry christianly under your crook here, ye will not lose your labour, but get a full reward

of grace in the other world, through Christ, 2 *Tim.* ii. 12. 1 *Cor.* xv. 58. There is a blessing pronounced on him that endureth, on this very ground, *Jam.* i. 12. *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: For when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.* Heaven is the place into which the approvén, upon the trial of the crook, are received, *Rev.* vii. 14. — *These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.* When ye come there, no vestiges of it will be remaining in your lot, nor will ye have the least uneasy remembrance of it? but it will accent your praises, and screw up your joy.

7. If you do not carry christianly under it, ye will lose your souls in the other world, *Jude* 15, 16. Those who are at war with God in their lot here, God will have war with them for ever. If they will not submit to his yoke here, and go quietly under it, he will wreath his yoke about their neck for ever, with everlasting bonds that shall never be loosed, *Job* ix. 4.

Lastly, Whatever crook is in the lot of any, it is very likely there is a public crook abiding the generation, that will be more trying. This is a day of sinning beyond the days of our fathers, a day wherein God is making great crooks in the lot of the dearest to himself; but these seem to presage such a general public crook to be abiding the generation, as will make our now private ones of very little weight, 1 *Pet.* iv. 17, 18. Therefore set yourselves to carry rightly under the crook in your lot.

If ye ask what way one may reach that, for direction we propose,

DOCTRINE *last*. The considering the crook in the lot, as the work of God, is a proper means to bring one to carry rightly under it.

I. What it is to consider the crook as the work of God, we take it up in these five things.

First, An inquiry into the spring whence it riseth, *Gen.* xxv. 22. Reason and religion both teach us, not only to notice the crook, which we cannot avoid, but to consider and enquire into the spring of it. Surely it is not our choice, nor do we designedly make it for ourselves: And to ascribe it to fortune, is to ascribe it to nothing; it is not sprung of itself, but sown by one hand or other for us, *Job* v. 6. And we are to notice the hand from whence it came.

Secondly, A perceiving of the hand of God in it. Whatever hand any creature hath therein, we ought not to terminate our view in them, but look above and beyond them to the supreme manager's agency therein, *Job* i. 21. Without this we make a God of the creature instrumental of the crook, looking on it as if it were the first cause, which is peculiar to God, *Rom.* xi. 36. And bring ourselves under that doom. *Psal.* xxviii. 5. *Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up.*

Thirdly, A representing it to ourselves as a work of God, which he hath wrought against us for holy and wise ends, becoming the divine perfections. This is to take it by the right handle, to represent it to ourselves under a right notion, from whence a right management under it may spring. It can never be safe to overlook God in it, but very safe to over-look the creature, ascribing it unto God, as if no other hand were in it, his being always the

principal therein.—*It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good*, 1 Sam. iii. 18. Thus David overlooked Shimei, and looked to God in the matter of his cursing, as one would the ax, fixing his eye on him that wielded it. Here two things are to come into our consideration.

1. The decree of God purposing that crook for us from eternity,—*For he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will*, Eph. i. 11. the sealed book in which are written all the blank lines that make the crook. Whatever valley of darkness, grief, and sorrow, we are carried through, we are to look on them as made by the mountains of brass, the immoveable divine purposes, *Zeck. vi. 1*. This can be no presumption in that case, if we carry it no farther than the event goes in our sight and feeling: For so far the book is opened for us to look into.

2. The providence of God bringing to pass that crook for us in time, *Amos iii. 6*. There is nothing can befall us without him in whom we live. Whatever kind of agency of the creatures may be in the making of our crook, whatever they have done or not done towards it, he is the spring that sets all the created wheels on motion, which ceasing, they would all stop; though he is still infinitely pure in his agency, however impure they be in theirs. *Job* considered both these, *Job xxiii. 14*.

Fourthly, A continuing of the thought of it as such. It is not a simple glance of the eye, but a contemplating, and leisurely viewing of it as his work, that is the proper mean. We are to be,

1. Habitually impressed with this consideration; as the crook is some lasting grievance, so the consideration of this as the remedy should be habitually kept up. There are other considerations besides this, that we must entertain, so that we cannot have it always expressly in our mind: But we must lay it down for a rooted principle, according to

which we are to manage the crook, and keep the heart in a disposition, whereby it may slip into our minds, as occasion requires, expressly.

2. Occasionally exercised in it. Whenever we begin to feel the smart of the crook, we should fetch in this remedy: When the yoke begins to gall the neck, there should be an application of this spiritual ointment. And however often the former comes on us, it will be our wisdom to fetch in the latter as the proper remedy: The oftener it is used, it will more easily come to hand, and also be the more effectual.

Lastly, A considering it for the end for which it is proposed to us, *viz.* to bring to a dutiful carriage under it. Mens corruption will cause them to enter on this consideration: And as is the principle, so will the end and effect of it be *corrupt*, 2 Kings vi. 33. But we must enter on, and use it for a good end, if we would have good of it, taking it as a practical consideration for regulating our conduct under the crook.

II. How it is to be understood to be a proper means to bring one to carry rightly under the crook.

1. *Negatively*, Not as if it were sufficient of itself, and as it stands alone, to produce that effect. But,

2. *Positively*, As it is used in faith, in the faith of the gospel: That is to say, a sinner's bare considering the crook in his lot as the work of God, without any saving relation to him, will never be a way to carry rightly under it: But having believed in Jesus Christ, and so taking God for his God, the considering of the crook as the work of God his God, is the proper means to bring him to that desirable temper and behaviour. Many hearers mistake here. When they here such and such law-considerations proposed for bringing them to duty, they presently imagine, that by the mere force of them, they may gain the point. And many preach-

ers too, who, forgetting Christ and the gospel, pretend by the force of reason to make men Christians: The eyes of both being held, they do not see the corruption of mens nature, which is such as sets the true cure above the force of reason: All that they are sensible of, being some ill habits, which they think may be shaken off by a vigorous application of their rational faculties. To clear this matter, consider,

First, Is it rational to think to set fallen man, with his corrupted nature, to work the same way with innocent *Adam*? This is to set beggars on a level with the rich, lame men to a journey with them that have limbs. Innocent *Adam* had a stock of gracious abilities, whereby he might have, by the force of moral considerations, brought himself to perform duty aright. But where is that with us? *2 Cor. iii. 5.* Whatever force be in them to a soul endued with spiritual life, what force is in them to raise the dead, such as we are? *Eph. ii. 4.*

Secondly, The scripture is very plain on this head, shewing the indispensable necessity of faith, *Heb. xi.* and that such as unites to Christ, *John xv. 5.* *Without me, i. e. separate from me, ye can do nothing*, no not with all the moral considerations ye can use. How were the ten commands given on mount *Sinai*? Not bare exactions of duty, but fronted with the gospel, to be believed in the first place; *I am the Lord thy God, &c.* And so *Solomon*, whom many do regard rather as a moral philosopher, than an inspired writer leading to Christ, fronts his writings, in the beginning of the *Proverbs*, with most express gospel. And must we have it expressly repeated in our *Bibles* with every moral precept, or else shut our eyes, and take these precepts without it? that is the effect of our natural enmity to Christ. If we loved him more, we,

would see him more in every page, and in every command, receiving the law at his mouth.

Thirdly, Do but consider what it is to carry rightly under the crook in the lot, what humiliation of soul, self-denial, and absolute resignation to the will of God, must be in it; what love to God it must proceed from; how regard to his glory must influence it as the chief end thereof; and try and see if it is not impossible for you to reach it without that faith afore-mentioned. I know a Christian may reach it without full assurance: But still, according to the measure of their persuasion that God is their God, so will their attainments in it be; these keep equal pace. O what kind of hearts do they imagine themselves to have, that think they can for a moment empty them of the creature, farther than they can fill them with a God, as their God, in its room and stead! No doubt men may, from the force of moral considerations, work themselves to a behaviour under the crook, externally right, such as many *Pagans* had; but a Christian disposition of spirit under it will never be reached without that faith in God.

OBJECTION. *Then it is saints only that are capable of the improvement of that consideration.* ANS. Yea, indeed it is so, as to that and all other moral considerations, for true Christian ends: And that amounts to no more, than that directions for walking rightly are only for the living, that have the use of their limbs; and therefore, that ye may improve it, set yourselves to *believe* in the first place.

III. I shall confirm that it is a proper mean to bring one to carry rightly under it. This will appear, if ye consider these four things,

First, It is of great use to divert from the considering and dwelling on these things about the *crook*, which serve to irritate our corruption. Such are the baulking of our will and wishes, the satisfac-

tion we would have in the matter's going according to our own mind, the instruments of the crook, how injurious they are to us, how unreasonable, how obstinate, &c. The dwelling on these considerations is but the blowing of the fire within: But to turn our eyes to it as the work of God, would be a cure by way of diversion, 2 Sam. vi. 9, 10. and such diversion of the thoughts is not only lawful, but expedient and necessary.

Secondly, It has a moral aptitude for producing the good effect. Though our cure is not compassed by the mere force of reason; yet it is carried on, not by a brutal movement, but in a rational way, Eph. v. 14. This consideration has a moral efficacy on our reason, is fit to awe us into a submission, and ministers a deal of argument for it, moving to carry christianly under our crook.

Thirdly, It has a divine appointment on it for that end, which is to be believed, Prov. iii. 6. so the text. The creature in itself is an inefficacious and moveless thing, a mere vanity, Acts xvii. 28. What makes any thing a means fit for the end, is a word of divine appointment, Matth. iv. 4. To use any thing then for that end, without the faith of this, is to make a God of the creature; therefore it is to be used in a dependance on God, according to that word of appointment, 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5. And every thing is fit for the end for which God has appointed it. This consideration is appointed for that end; and therefore is a fit means for it.

Lastly, The spirit may be expected to work by it, and does work by it in them that believe, and look to him for it, soasmuch as it is a mean of his his own appointment. Papists, Legalists, and all superstitious persons, devise various means of sanctification, seeming to have, or really having a moral fitness for the same: But they are quite inef-

fectual, because, like *Abana* and *Parphar*, they want a word of divine appointment, for curing us of our leprosy; therefore the spirit works not by them, since they are none of his own tools, but devised of their hearts. And since the means of divine appointment are ineffectual without the Spirit, these can never be effectual. But this consideration having a divine appointment, the Spirit works by it.

Use. Then take this direction for your carrying right under the crook in your lot. Inure yourselves to consider it as the work of God. And for helping you to improve it, so as it may be effectual, I offer these advices.

1. Consider it as the work of your God in Christ. This is the way to sprinkle it with gospel grace, and so to make it tolerable, *Psal.* xxii. 1, 2, 3. The discerning of a father's hand in the crook will take out much of the bitterness of it, and sugar the pill to you. For this cause it will be necessary, (1.) Solemnly to take God for your God under your crook, *Psal.* cxliii. 4, 5. (2.) In all your encounters with it, resolutely to believe and claim your interest in him, 1 *Sam.* xxx. 6.

2. Enlarge the consideration with a view of the divine relations to you, and the divine attributes. Consider it, being the work of your God, the work of your father, elder brother, head, husband, &c. who therefore surely consults your good. Consider his holiness and justice, shewing he wrongs you not; his mercy and goodness that it is not worse; his sovereignty, that may silence you; his infinite wisdom and love, that may satisfy you in it.

3. Consider what a work of his it is, how it is a convincing work, for bringing sin to remembrance; a correcting work, to chastise you for your follies; a preventing work, to hedge you up from courses of sin ye would otherwise be apt to run into; a try-

ing work, to discover your state, your graces, and corruptions; a weaning work, to wean you from the world, and fit you for heaven.

Lastly, In all your considerations of it, in this manner look upward for his Spirit to render them effectual, 1 Cor. iii. 6. Thus may ye carry christianly under it, till God even it either here or in heaven.

PROVERBS xvi. 19.

Better is it to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.

COULD men once be brought to believe, that it is better to have their minds brought to ply with the crook in their lot, than to force even the crook to their mind, they would then be in a fair way to bring their matters in that case to a good account. Hear then the divine decision in that case, *Better it is to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.* In which words,

First, There is a comparison instituted, and that between two parties, and two points wherein they vastly differ.

1st, The parties are the *lowly* and the *proud*, who differ like heaven and the centre of the earth; the *proud* are ay climbing up, and soaring aloft; the *lowly* are content to creep on the ground, if that is the will of God: Let us view them more particularly as the text represents them.

(1.) On the one hand is the *lowly*. Here there is a line reading and a marginal, both from the Ho-

ly Spirit, and they differ only in a letter, the former is the afflicted or poor, that are low in their condition; those that have a notable crook in their lot through affliction laid on them, whereby their condition is lowered in the world. The other is the lowly or meek humble ones who are low in their spirit as well as their condition, and so have their minds brought down to their lot. Both together make the character of this lowly party.

(2.) On the other hand is the *proud*, the gay, and high-minded ones. It is supposed here that they are crost too, and have crooks in their lot; for dividing the spoil is the consequent of a victory, and a victory pre-supposes a battle.

2d. The points wherein these parties are supposed to differ, *viz* being of a humble spirit, and dividing the spoil.

Afflicted and lowly ones may sometimes get their condition changed, may be raised on high, and divide the spoil, as *Hannah*, *Job*, &c. The proud may be sometimes thrown down and crushed, as *Pharaoh*, *Nebuchadnezzar*, &c. But that is not the question. Whether it is better to be raised up with the *lowly*, or thrown down with the *proud*. But the question is, Whether is it better to be of a low and humble spirit, in low circumstances, with afflicted humble ones, or to divide the spoil, and get one's will, with the proud? If men would speak the native sentiments of their hearts, that question would be determined in a contradiction to the text. The points then here compared, and set one against another, are these.

(1.) On the one hand, to be of a humble spirit with afflicted lowly ones, *Hebrew*, to be of low spirit, for the word primarily denotes lowness in situation or state; so the point here supposed is to be with, or in the state of afflicted lowly ones, having the spirit brought down to that low lot, the low-

ness of the spirit ballancing the lowness of one's condition.

(2.) On the other hand, to divide the spoil with the proud. The point here proposed is, to be with, or in the state of the proud, having their lot by main force brought to their mind; as those who, taking themselves to be injured, fight it out with the enemy, overcome and divide the spoil according to their will.

Secondly, The decision made, wherein the former is preferred to the latter, *Better it is*, &c. If these two parties were set before us, 'it were better to take our lot with those of a low condition, who have their spirits brought as low as their lot, than with those who, being of a proud and high-bended spirit, have their lot brought up to their mind. A humbled spirit is better than a heightened condition.

DOCTRINE. *There is a generation of lowly afflicted ones, having their spirits lowered and brought down to their lot, whose case, in that respect, is better than that of the proud getting their will, and carrying all to their mind.*

I. We shall consider the generation of the lowly afflicted ones, having their spirit brought down to their lot. And we shall,

First, Lay down some general considerations about them.

1. There is such a generation in the world, for as bad as the world is. The text expressly mentions them, and the scripture elsewhere makes mention of them, as *Psal. ix. 12. & x. 12. Matth. v. 3. with Luke vi. 20.* Where shall we seek them? Not in heaven, there are no afflicted ones there: not in hell, there are no lowly or humble ones there, whose spirit is brought to their lot. In this

world they must then be where the state of trial is.

2. If it were not so, Christ, as he was in the world, would have no followers in it. He was the head of that generation whom they all copy after. — *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart*, Matth. xi. 29. And for his honour, and the honour of his cross, they will never be wanting while the world stands, Rom. viii. 29. — *Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son*. His image lies in these two, *suffering* and *holiness*, whereof *lowliness* is a chief part.

3. Nevertheless they are certainly very rare in the world; *Agur* observes there is another generation, (*Prov. xxx. 13. Their eyes are lofty, and their eye-lids lifted up*) quite opposite to them, and this makes the greatest company by far. The low and afflicted lot is not so very rare, but the lowly disposition of spirit is rarely yoked with it. Many a high-bended spirit keeps on the bend in spite of lowering circumstances.

4. They can be no more in number than the truly godly; for nothing less than the power of divine grace can bring down mens minds from their native height, and make their will pliant to the will of God, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. Men may put on a face of submission to a low and cross'd lot, because they cannot help it, and they see it in vain to strive: But to bring the spirit truly to it, must be the effect of humbling grace.

5. Though all the godly are of that generation, yet there are some of them to whom that character more especially belongs. The way to heaven lies through tribulation to all, *Acts xiv. 22.* and all Christ's followers are reconciled to it notwithstanding, *Luke xiv. 26.* yet there are some of them more remarkably disciplined than others, whose spirit however is thereby humbled, and brought down to their lot, *Psal. cxxxi. 2. Surely I have behaved and quiet-*

ed myself as a child that is weaned of his mother : My soul is even as a weaned child. Phil. iv. 11, 12.

—For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound : Every where, and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

Lastly, A lowly disposition of soul, and habitual aim and bent of the heart that way, has a very favourable construction put upon it in heaven. Should we look for a generation perfectly purged of pride and risings of heart against their adverse lot at any time, we would find none in this world : But these who are sincerely aiming and endeavouring to reach it, and keep the way of contented submission, tho' sometimes they are blown aside, returning to it again, God accounts to be that lowly generation, *2 Cor. viii. 12. Jam. v. 11.*

Secondly, We shall enter into the particulars of their character. There are three things which together make up their character,

1st, Affliction in their lot. That lowly generation, preferred to the proud and prosperous, are a generation of afflicted ones, whom God keeps under the discipline of the covenant. We may take it up in these two.

1. There is a yoke of affliction of one kind or other oftentimes upon them, *Psal. lxxiii. 14.* If there be silence in heaven, it is but for half an hour, *Rev. viii. 1.* God is frequently visiting them, as a master does his scholars, and a physician his patients ; whereas others are in a sort overlooked by him, *Rev. iii. 19.* They are accustomed to the yoke, and that from the time they enter into God's family, *Psal. cxxix. 1, 2, 3.* God sees it good for them, *Lam. iii. 27, 28.*

2. There is a particular yoke of affliction, which God has chosen for them, that hangs about them,

and is seldom, if ever, off them, *Luke ix. 23*. That is their special trial, the crook in their lot, the yoke which lies on them for their constant exercise. Their other trials may be changed, but that is a weight that still hangs about them bowing them down.

2dly, Lowliness in their disposition and tenor of spirit. They are a generation of lowly humble ones, whose spirits God has by his grace brought down from their natural height. And thus,

1. They think soberly and meanly of themselves; what they are, *2 Cor. xii. 11*. what they can do, *2 Cor. iii. 5*. what they are worth, *Gen. xxxii. 10*. and what they deserve, *Lam. iii. 22*. Viewing themselves in the glass of the divine law and perfection, they see themselves a mass of imperfection and sinfulness, *Job xlii. 5, 6*.

2. They think highly and honourably of God, *Psal. cxliv. 3*. They are taught by the spirit what God is, and so entertain elevated thoughts of him. They consider him as the sovereign of the world, his perfections as infinite, his work as perfect. They look upon him as the fountain of happiness, as a God in Christ; doing all things well, trusting his wisdom, goodness and love, even where they cannot see, *Heb. xi. 8*.

3. They think favourably of others, as far as in justice they may, *Phil. ii. 3*. Though they cannot hinder themselves to see their glaring faults, yet they are ready withal to acknowledge their excellencies, and esteem them so far. And because they see more into their own mercies and advantages for holiness, and misimproving thereof, than they can see into others, they are apt to look on others as better than themselves, circumstances compared.

4. They are sunk down into a state of subordination to God and his will, *Psal. cxxx. 1, 2*. Pride sets up a man against God, lowliness brings him

back to his place, and lays him down at the feet of his sovereign Lord, saying, *Thy will be done on earth, &c.* They seek no more the command, but are content that God himself sit at the helm of their affairs, and manage all for them, *Psal. xlvii. 4.*

5. They are not bent on high things, but disposed to stoop to low things, *Psal. cxxx. 1.* Lowliness levels the towering imaginations, which pride mounts up against heaven; draws a veil over all personal worth and excellencies before the Lord, and yields a man's all to the Lord, to be as stepping stones to the throne of his glory, *2 Sam. xv. 25, 26.*

Lastly, They are apt to magnify mercies bestowed on them, *Gen. xxxii. 10.* Pride of heart overlooks and vilifies mercies one is possessed of, and fixeth the eye on what is wanting in one's condition, making one like the flies, which pass over the sound places, and swarm together on the sore. On the contrary, lowliness teaches men to recount the mercies they enjoy in the lowest condition, and to set a mark upon the good things they have possessed, or yet do, *Job ii. 10.*

3dly, A spirit brought down to their lot. Their lot is a low and afflicted one; but their spirit is as low, being through grace brought down to it. We may take it up in these five things.

1. They submit to it as just, *Mic. vii. 9.* *I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him.*—There are no hardships in our condition, but we have procured them to ourselves; and it is therefore just we kiss the rod, and be silent under it, and so lower our spirits to our lot. If they complain, they have their complaints on themselves; their hearts rise not up against the Lord, far less do they open their mouths against the heavens. They justify God, and condemn them-

selves, reverencing his holiness and spotless righteousness in his proceedings against them.

2. They go quietly under it as tolerable, *Lam. iii. 26,—29. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sitteth alone, and keepeth silence, because he hath born it upon him. He putteth his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope.* While the unsubdued spirit rageth under the yoke, as a bullock unaccustomed to it, the spirit brought to the lot goes softly under it. They see it is of the Lord's mercies that it is not worse; they take up the naked cross, as God lays it down, without these overweights upon it that turbulent passions add thereto; and so it becomes really more easy than they thought it could have been like a burden fitted on the back.

3. They are satisfied in it, as drawing their comfort from another air than their outward condition, even as the house stands fast when the prop is taken away that it did not lean upon: *Although the fig tree should not blossom, neither fruit be in the vine,—yet I will rejoice on the Lord—Hab. iii. 17, 18.* Thus did *David* in the day of his distress, *he encouraged himself in the Lord his God, 1 Sam. xxx. 6.* It is an argument of a spirit not brought down to the lot, when one is damped and sunk under the hardships of it, as if their condition in the world were the point whereon their happiness turned. It is want of mortification that makes mens comforts to wax and wane, ebb and flow, according to the various appearances of their lot in the world.

4. They have a complacency in it, as that which is fit and good for them, *Isa. xxxix. 8. 2 Cor. xii. 10.* Men have a sort of complacency in the working of physic, though it gripes them sore, they rationally think with themselves that it is good and best for them; so these lowly souls consider their

afflicted lot as a spiritual medicine, necessary, fit, and good for them, yea, best for them for the time, since it is ministred by their heavenly Father; and so they reach a holy complacency in their low afflicted lot.

The lowly spirit extracts this sweet out of the bitterness in his lot, considering how the Lord, by means of that afflicting lot, stops the provision for unruly lusts, that they may be starved; how he cuts off the by-channels, that the whole stream of the souls love may run towards himself; how he pulls off and holds off the man's burden and clog of earthly comforts, that he may run the more expeditiously in the way to heaven.

Lastly, They rest in it, as what they desire not to come out of, till the God that brought them into it see meet to bring them out with his good will, *Isa.* xxviii. 16. Though an unsubdued spirit's time for deliverance is always ready, a humbled soul will be afraid of being taken out of its afflicted lot too soon. It will not be for moving for a change, till the heaven's moving bring it about; so this hinders not prayer, and the use of appointed means with dependance on the Lord, but requires faith, hope, patience and resignation, *2 Sam.* xv. 25. 26.

II. We shall consider the generation of the *proud*, getting their will, and carrying all to their mind. And in their character also are three things.

1st, Crosses in their lot. They also have their trials allotted them by over-ruling providence; and let them be in what circumstances they will in the world, they cannot miss them altogether. For consider,

1. The confusion and vanity brought into the creation by man's sin, hath made it impossible to get through the world, but men must meet with what will ruffle them, *Eccl.* i. 14. Sin has turned the world from a paradise into a thicket, there is

no getting through without being scratched. As the midges in the summer will fly about those walking abroad in a goodly attire, as well as about those in fordid apparel; so will crosses in the world meet with the high as well as the low.

2. The pride of their heart exposes them particularly to crosses. A proud heart will make a cross to itself, where a lowly soul would find none; *Eph. v. 13*. It will make a real cross ten times the weight it would be to the humble. The generation of the proud are like nettles and thorn hedges, upon which things flying about do fix, while they pass over low and plain things: So none are more exposed to crosses than they, though none so unfit to bear them: As appears from,

2dly, Reigning pride in their spirit. Their spirits were never subdued by a work of thorough humiliation, they remain at the height in which the corruption of nature set them; hence they can by no means bear the yoke God lays on them. The neck is swollen with the ill humours of pride and passion; hence, when the yoke once begins to touch it, they cannot have any more ease. We may view the case of the proud generation here in three things.

1. They have an over-value for themselves; and so the proud mind says, the man should not stoop to the yoke; it is below them. What a swelling vanity is in that, *Exod. v. 2*. *Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?* Hence a work of humiliation is necessary to make one take on the yoke, whether of Christ's precepts or providence. The first error is in their understanding, whence *Solomon* ordinarily calls a wicked man a fool; accordingly the first stroke in conversion is there too, by conviction to humble, Men are bigger in their own conceit than they are indeed; therefore God, suiting things to what we are really, cannot please us.

2. They have an unmortified self-will arising from

that over-value for themselves, and it says he will not stoop, *Exod. v. 2.* The question betwixt heaven and us is, Whether God's will or our own must carry it? Our will is corrupt, God's will is holy; they cannot agree in one. God says, in his providence, our will must yield to his: But that it will not do till the iron sinew in it be broken, *Rom. vi. 7. Isa. xlviii. 4.*

3. They have a croud of unsubdued passions taking part with the self-will, and they say, he shall not stoop, *Rom. vii. 8, 9.* and so the war begins, and there is a field of battle within and without the man, *Jam. iv. 1.*

(1.) A holy God crosses the self-will of the proud creatures by his providence, over-ruling and disposing of things contrary to their inclination; sometimes by his own immediate hand, as in the case of *Cain*, *Gen. iv. 4, 5.* sometimes by the hand of men carrying things against their mind, as in the case of *Ahab*, to whom *Naboth* refused his vineyard, *1 Kings xvi. 4.*

(2.) The proud heart and will, unable to submit to the cross, or to bear to be controlled, rises up against it, and fights for the mastery, with its whole force of unmortified passions. The design is to remove the cross, even the crook, and bring the thing to their own mind: This is the cause of this unholy war; in which,

(1.) There is one black band of hellish passions that marches upward, and makes an attack on heaven itself, *viz.* Discontent, impatience, murmuring, fretting, and the like. *The foolishness of man perverteth his way: And his heart fretteth against the Lord, Prov. xix. 3.* These fire the breast, make the countenance fall, *Gen. iv. 6.* let off sometimes a volley of indecent and passionate complaints, *Jude 16.* and sometimes of blasphemies, *2 Kings vi. 33.*

(2.) There is another that marches forward, and makes an attack on the instrument or instruments of the cross, viz. anger, wrath, fury, revenge, bitterness, &c. *Prou. xxvii. 4.* These carry the man out of the possession of himself, *Luke xxi. 19.* fill the heart with a boiling heat, *Psal. xxxix. 3.* the mouth with clamour and evil speaking, *Eph. iv. 31.* and threatnings are breathed out, *Acts ix. 1.* and sometimes set the hands on work, so as has a most heavy event, *Matth. v. 21, 22.* as in the case of *Ahab* against *Naboth*.

Thus the proud carry on the war, but oftentimes they lose the day, and the cross remains immoveable for all they can do; yea, and sometimes they themselves fall in the quarrel, it ends in their ruin, *Exod. xv. 9, 10.* But that is not the case in the text: We are to consider them as,

3dly, Getting their will, and carrying all to their mind. This speaks,

1. Holy providence yielding to the man's unmortified self-will, and letting it go according to his mind, *Gen. vi. 3.* God sees it meet to let the struggle with him fall, for it prevails not to his good, *Isa. i. 5.* So the reins are laid on the proud man's neck, and he has what he would be at, *Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone, Hof. iv. 17.*

2. The lust remaining in its strength and vigour, *Psal. lxxviii. 30.* They were not estranged from their lust. God, in the method of his covenant, sometimes gives his people their will, and sets them where they would be: But then in that case, the lust for the thing is mortified, and they are as weaned children, *Psal. x. 17.* But here the lust remains rampant; the proud seek meat for it, and get it.

3. The cross removed, the yoke taken off, *Psal. lxxviii. 29.* They could not think of bringing their mind to their lot; but they thwarted with it,

wrestled and fought against it, till it is brought up to their mind : So the day is their own, the victory is on their side.

Lastly, The man is pleased in his having carried his point, even as one when he is dividing the spoil, 1 *Kings* xxi. 18.

Thus the case of the afflicted lowly generation, and the proud generation prospering, is stated. Now,

III. I am to confirm the doctrine or the decision of the text. That the case of the former is better than that of the latter. It is better to be in a low afflicted condition, with the spirit humbled and brought down to the lot, than to be of a proud and high spirit, getting the lot brought up to it, and matters going to will and wish, according to one's mind. This will appear from the following considerations :

1st, Humility is so far preferable to pride, that in no circumstances whatsoever its preferableness can fail. Let all the afflictions in a world attend the humble spirit, and all the prosperity in the world attend pride, humility will still have the better ; as gold upon a dunghill is more excellent than so much lead in a cabinet. For,

1. Humility is a piece of the image of God. Pride is the master-piece of the image of the devil. Let us view him who was the express image of the Father's person, and we shall behold him meek and lowly in heart, *Matth.* xi. 29. None more afflicted, yet his spirit perfectly brought down to his lot. *Isa.* liii. 7. *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth.* That is a shining piece of the divine image : For although God cannot be low in respect of his state and condition, yet he is of infinite condescension, *Isa.* lvii. 15. None bears as he, *Rom.* ii. 4. nor suffers patiently so much contradiction to his will, which is proposed to us.

for our encouragement in affliction, as it shone in Christ, *For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your mind,* Heb. xii. 3.

Pride, on the other hand, is the very image of the devil, 1 Tim. iii. 6. Will we value ourselves on the height of our spirits? Satan will vie with the highest of us in that point; for though he is the most miserable, yet he is the proudest in the whole creation. There is the greatest distance between his spirit and his lot; the former is as high as the throne of God, the latter as low as hell: And as it is impossible that ever his lot should be brought up to his spirit, so his spirit will never come down to his lot: And therefore he will be eternally in a state of war with his lot. Hence, even at this time, he has no rest, but goes about, seeks rest indeed, but finds none.

Now, is it not better to be like God, than like the devil? Like him who is the fountain of all good, than him who is the spring and sink of all evil? Can any thing possibly cast the balance here, and turn the preference to the other side? *Then better it is to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, &c.*

2. Humility and lowliness of spirit qualify us for friendly communion and intercourse with God in Christ. Pride makes God our enemy, 1 Pet. v. 5. Our happiness here and hereafter depends on our friendly intercourse with heaven. If we have not that, nothing can make up our loss, *Psal. xxx. v.* If we have that, nothing can make us miserable, *Rom. viii. 31.*—*If God be for us, who can be against us?* Now, who are they whom God is for, but the humble and lowly? they who being in Christ, are so made like him. He blesses them, and declares them the heirs of the crown of glory, *Blessed are the pure in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,* Matth. v. 3. He will look to them, be their con-

dition never so low, while he overlooks others, *Isa.* lxvi. 2. He will have respect to them, however they be despised: *Though the Lord be high, yet he hath respect to the lowly, but the proud he knoweth afar off*, *Psal.* cxxxviii. 6. He will dwell with them, however poorly they dwell, *Isa.* lvii. 15. He will certainly exalt them in due time, however low they ly now, *Isa.* xl. 4.

Whom is he against? Whom does he resist? The proud. Them he curseth, *Jer.* xvii. 5. and that curse will dry up their arm at length. The proud man is God's rival; he makes himself his own God, and would have those about him make him theirs too: He rages, he blusters, if they will not fall down before him. But God will bring him down, *Isa.* xl. 4. *Psal.* xviii. 27.

Now is it not better to be qualified for communion with God, than to have him engaged against us at any rate?

3. Humility is a duty pleasing to God, pride a sin pleasing to the devil, *Isa.* lvii. 15. *1 Tim.* iii. 6. God requires us to be humble, especially under affliction,—and be cloathed with humility—*1 Pet.* v. 5, 6. that is our becoming garment. The humble *Publican* was accepted, the proud *Pharisee* rejected. We may say of the generation of the proud, as *1 Thess.* ii. 16. *Wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.* They please neither God nor men, but only themselves and Satan, whom they resemble in it. Now, duty is ay better than sin at any rate.

2dly, They whose spirits are brought down to their afflicted lot, have much quiet and repose of mind, while the proud, that must have their lot brought up to their mind, have much disquiet, trouble, and vexation. Consider here, that, on the one hand,

1. Quiet of mind, and ease within, is a great blessing, upon which the comfort of life depends. No-

thing without this can make one's life happy, *Dan. v. 6.* And where this is maintained, nothing can make it miserable, *John xvi. 33.* This being secured in God, there is a defiance bid to all the troubles of the world, *Psal. xlv. 2, 3, 4.* Like the child sailing in the midst of the rolling waves.

2. The spirit brought down to the lot, makes and maintains this inward tranquillity. Our whole trouble in our lot in the world riseth from the disagreement of our mind therewith: Let the mind be brought to the lot, and the whole tumult is instantly hush'd: Let it be kept in that disposition, and the man shall stand at ease in his affliction, like a rock unmoved with waters beating on it, *Col. iii. 15.* *And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called—*

On the other hand consider,

1. What disquiet of mind the proud do suffer, ere they can get their lot brought up to their mind. —*They have taught their tongue to speak lies, and they weary themselves to commit iniquity, Jer. ix. 5. Jam. iv. 2. Ye lust, and have not: Ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: Ye fight and war, yet ye have not.*—What arrows of grief go through their heart? What torture of anxiety, fretting and vexation must they endure? What contrary passions do fight within them? And what sallies of passions do they make? What uneasiness was *Haman* in before he could carry the point of the revenge against *Mordecai*, obtaining the king's decree?

2. When the thing is got to their mind, it will not quit the cost. The enjoyment thereof brings not so much satisfaction and pleasure, as the want of it gave pain. This was evident in *Rachel's* case as to the having of children, and in that case, *Psal. lxxviii. 30, 31.* There is a dead fly in the ointment that mars the favour they expected to

find in it. Fruit pluck'd off the tree of providence, ere it is ripe, will readily set the teeth on edge. It proves like the manna kept over night, *Exod. xvi. 20.*

3. They have but an unsure grip of it; it doth not last with them. Either it is taken from them soon, and they are just where they were again, *I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath, Hos. xiii. 11.* having a root of pride, it quickly withers away; or else they are taken from it, that they have no access to enjoy it. So *Haman* obtained the decree; but ere the day of execution came, he was gone.

3dly, They that get their spirit brought down to their afflicted lot, do gain a point far more valuable than they who, in their pride, force up their lot to their mind, *Prov. xvi. 32. He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty: And he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.* This will appear, if ye consider,

1. The latter makes but a better condition in outward things, the former makes a better man. The life is more than meat.—The man himself is more valuable than all external conveniences that attend him. What therefore betters the man is preferable to what only betters his condition. Who doubts, but where two are sick, and the one gets himself transported from a coarse bed to a fine one, but the sickness still remaining; the other lies still in the coarse bed, but the sickness is removed, that the case of the latter is preferable? So, &c.

2. The subduing of our passions is more excellent than to have the whole world subdued to our will: For then we are masters of ourselves, according to that, *Luke xxi. 19.* Whereas in the other case, we are still a slave to the worst of masters, *Rom. vi. 16.* In the one case, we are safe, blow what storm will; in the other, we ly exposed to thousands of

dangers, *Prov. xxv. 28.* *He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down and without walls.*

Lastly, When both shall come to be judged, it will appear the one has multiplied the tale of their good works, in bringing their spirit to their lot: The other the tale of their ill works, in bringing their lot to their spirit. We have to do with an omniscient God, in whose eyes every internal action is a work, good or bad, to be reckoned for, *Rom. ii. 16.*

An afflicted lot is painful, but, where is it well managed, it is very fruitful; it exercises the graces of the Spirit in a Christian, which otherwise would ly dormant. But there is never an act of resignation to the will of God under the cross, nor an act of trusting in him for his help, but they will be recorded in heaven's register as good works, *Mal. iii. 16.* And these are occasioned by affliction.

On the other hand, there is never a rising of the proud heart against the lot, nor a faithless attempt to bring it to our mind, whether it succeed or not, but it passes for an ill work before God. How then will the tale of such be multiplied by the war in which the spoil is divided!

USE I. Of information. Hence we may learn,

1. It is not always best for folk to get their will. Many there are who cannot be pleased with God's will about them, and they get their own will with a vengeance, *Psal. lxxxi. 11, 12.*—*Israel would none of me. So I gave them up to their own hearts lust; and they walked in their own counsels.* It may be pleasantest and gratefulest for the time, but it is not the safest. Let not people pride themselves in their carrying things that way then by strong hand; let them not triumph on such a victory: The after-reckoning will open their eyes.

2. The afflicted crossed party, whose lot is kept low, is so far from being a loser, that he is a gain-

er thereby, if his spirit is brought down to it. And if he will see his case in the light of God's unerring word, he is in better case than if he had got all carried to his mind. In the one way, the vessels of wrath are fitted for destruction, *Psal.* lxxxviii. 29, 30, 31. In the other, the vessels of mercy are fitted for glory, and so God disciplines his own, *Lam.* iii. 27.

3. It is better to yield to providence, than to fight it out, though we should win. Yielding to the sovereign disposal is both our becoming duty and our greatest interest. Taking that way we act most honourably: For what honour can there be in a creature's disputing his ground with his Creator? And we act most wisely: For whatever may be the success of some battles in that case, we may be sure victory will be on heaven's side in the war, *1 Sam.* ii. 9.—*For by strength shall no man prevail.*

Lastly, It is of a far greater concern for us to get our spirits brought down than our outward condition raised. But who believes this? All men strive to raise their outward condition; most men never mind the bringing down of their spirits, and few there are who apply themselves to it. And what is that but to be concerned to minister drink to the thirsty sick, but never to mind to seek a cure for them, whereby their thirst may be carried off.

USE II. As you meet with crosses in your lot in the world, let your bent be rather to get your spirit humbled and brought down, than to get the cross removed. I mean not but that ye may use all lawful means for the removal of your cross, in dependence on God; but only that you be more concerned to get your spirit to bow and ply, than to get the crook in your lot evened.

Motive I. It is far more needful for us to have our spirits humbled under the cross, than to have the cross removed. The removal of the cross is needful only for the ease of the flesh, the humbling

for the profit of our souls, to purify them, and bring them into a state of health and cure.

II. The humbling of the spirit will have a mighty good effect on a crossed lot, but the removal of the cross will have none on the unhumbléd spirit. The humbling will lighten the cross mightily for the time, *Matth. xi. 30.* and in due time carry it cleanly off, *1 Pet. v. 6.* But the removal of the cross is not a means to humble the unhumbléd; though it may prevent irritation, yet the disease still remains.

Lastly, Think with yourselves how dangerous and hopeless a case it is to have the cross removed ere the spirit is humbled, that is, to have the means of cure pulled away, and blocked up from us, while the power of the disease is yet unbroken; to be taken off trials ere we have given any good proof of ourselves, and so to be given over of our physician as hopeless, *Isa. i. 5. Hc/. iv. 17.*

For direction, believing the gospel, take God for your God in Christ towards your eternal salvation, and then dwell much on the thoughts of God's greatness and holiness, and of your own sinfulness, so will ye be humbled under the mighty hand of God, and in due time he will lift you up.

I P E T E R V. 6,

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.

IN the preceeding part of this chapter, the apostle presseth the duties of church officers towards the people, and then the duty of the people, both

towards their officers, and among themselves, which he winds up in one word, *Submission*. For which causes he recommends humility as the great means to bring all to their respective duties. This is enforced with an argument taken from the different treatment the Lord gives to the proud and the humble ; his opposing himself to the one, and shewing favour to the other. Our text is an exhortation drawn from that consideration : And in it we have,

1. The duty we are therefore to study, *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.* And therein we may notice,

(1.) The state of those whom it is proposed to, *these under the mighty hand of God*, whom his hand has humbled, or stated some way low in respect of their circumstances in the world. And by these are, I think, meant, not only such as are under particular signal afflictions, which is the lot of some, but also those who, by the providence of God, are any manner of way lowered, which is the lot of all. All being in a state of submission or dependence on others, God has made this life a state of trial ; and for that cause he has, by his mighty hand, subjected men one to another, as wives, children, servants, to husbands, parents, masters ; and these again to their superiors ; among whom, again, even the highest depend on those under them, as magistrates and ministers on the people, even the supreme magistrate, being *major singulis, minor universis*. This state of the world God has made for taking trial of men in their several stations and dependance on others : And therefore when the time of trial is over, it also comes to an end. *Then cometh the end—when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power,* 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25. Mean time, while it lasts, it makes humility necessary to all, to prompt them to the duty they owe

their superiors, to whom God's mighty hand has subjected them.

(2.) The duty itself, *viz.* Humiliation of our spirits under humbling circumstances the Lord has placed us in. *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.* Whether it is we are under particular afflictions, which have cast us down from the height we were sometimes in, or whether we are only inferiors in one or more relations, or whether, which is most common, both these are in our case, we must therein eye the mighty hand of God, as that which placed us there, and is over us there to hold us down in it; and so with an awful regard thereto, couch down under it in the temper and disposition of our spirits, suiting our spirits to our lot, and careful of performing the duty of our low sphere.

(3.) A particular spring of this duty, *therefore*: we must consider, that those who cannot quietly keep the places assigned them of God, in their afflictions or relations, but still press upward against the mighty hand that is over them, that mighty hand resists them, throwing them down, and often farther down than before; whereas it treats them with grace and favour that compose themselves under it, to a quiet discharge of their duty in their situation; so, eyeing this, we must set ourselves to humble ourselves.

2. The infallible issue of that course, *that he may exalt you in due time.* The particle *that*, is not always to be understood finally, as denoting the end or design the agent proposes to himself, but sometimes eventually only, as denoting the event or issue of the action, *John ix. 2. 1 John ii. 19.* So here, the meaning is not, *Humble yourselves*, on design *he may exalt you*, but—and it shall issue in his exalting you. Compare *James iv. 10.*

(1.) Here is a happy event of humiliation of spi-

rit secured, and that is exaltation, or lifting up on high, by the power of God, *that he*, &c. Exalting will as surely follow on humiliation of spirit suitable to the low lot, as the morning follows the night, or the sun riseth after the dawning. And these words are fitted to obviate the objections that the world and our corrupt hearts are apt to make against bringing down the spirit to the low lot.

Object. 1. *If we let our spirit fall, we will ly always among folks feet, and they will trample on us.*

Ans. No; pride of heart unsubdued will bring men to ly among the feet of others for ever, *Isa.* lxvi. 24. but humiliation of spirit will bring them undoubtedly out from among their feet, *Mal.* iv. 2, 3. They that humble themselves now, will be exalted for ever; they will be brought out of their low situation and circumstances. Cast ye yourselves even down with your low lot, and assure yourselves ye shall not ly there.

Object. 2. *If we do not raise ourselves, none will raise us: And therefore we must see to ourselves to do ourselves right.* *Ans.* That is wrong; humble ye yourselves in respect of your lot or low condition; and they that have God engaged for raising them, have no reason to say they have none to do it for them. Bringing down of the spirit is our duty, raising up is God's work: Let us not forfeit the privilege of God's raising us up, by arrogating that work to ourselves, taking it out of his hand.

Object. 3. *But sure we will never rise high, if we let our spirits fall.* *Ans.* That is wrong too; God will not only raise the humble one's, but he will lift them on high, for so the word signifies. They shall be as high at length as ever they were low, were they ever so low; nay, the exaltation will bear proportion to the humiliation.

(2.) Here is the date of that happy event, when it will fall out. In due time, or in the season, the

proper season for it, *Gal. vi. 9.*—*In due season we shall reap, if we faint not.* We are apt to weary in humbling trying circumstances, and ay we would have up our head, *John vii. 6.* But *Solomon* observes there is a time for every thing when it does best, and the wise will wait it, *Ecc. iii. 1.* There is a time too for exalting them that humble themselves; God has set it, and it is the due time for the purpose, the time when it does best, even as sowing in the spring, and reaping in the harvest. When that time comes, your exalting shall no longer be put off, and it would come too soon should it come before that time.

DOCTRINE I. *The bent of one's heart, in humbling circumstances should ly towards a suitable humbling of the spirit, as under God's mighty hand placing us in them.*

I. Some things supposed in this. It supposeth and bears in it, That,

1. God brings men into humbling circumstances, *Ezek. xvii. 24.* *And all the trees of the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree.*—There is a root of pride in the hearts of all men on earth, that must be mortified ere they can be meet for heaven; And therefore no man can miss, in this time of trial, some things that will give a proof whether he can stoop or no. And God brings them into humbling circumstances for that end, *Deut. viii. 2.*—*The Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, and to know what was in thine heart.*

2. These circumstances prove pressing as a weight on the heart, tending to bear it down, *Psal. cvii. 12.* *Therefore he brought down their heart with labour.*—They strike at the grain of the heart, and

cross the natural inclination ; whence a trial naturally ariseth, whether when God lays on his mighty hand, the man can yield under it, or not ; and consequently, whether he is meet for heaven, or not.

3. The heart is naturally apt to rise against these humbling circumstances, and consequently against the mighty hand that brings and keeps them on. The man naturally bends his force to get off the weight, that he may get up his head, seeking more to please himself than to please his God, *Job xxxv. 9, 10.*—*They cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty ; but none saith, Where is God my maker ?* This is the first gate the heart runs to in humbling circumstances, and in this way the unsubdued spirits hold on.

4. But what God requires is, rather to labour to bring down the heart, than to get up the head, *Jam. iv. 10.* Here lies the proof of one's meetness for heaven ; and then is one in the way heaven-ward, when he is more concerned to get down his heart than up his head ; to go calmly under his burden, than to get it off ; to crouch under the mighty hand, than to put it off him.

Lastly, There must be a noticing of God as our party, in humbling circumstances—*Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it, Mic. vi. 9.* There is an abjectness of spirit, whereby some give up themselves to the will of others in the harshest treatment, merely to please them, without regard to the authority and command of God. This is real meanness of spirit, whereby one lies quietly to be trampled on by a fellow-worm, from its imaginary weight : And none so readily fall into it as the proud, at sometimes, to serve their turn, *Acts xii. 22.* These are *men pleasers*, *Eph. vi. 6.* with *Gal. i. 10.*

II. What are these humbling circumstances the mighty hand brings them into. Supposing here, what was before taught concerning the crook in the

lot's being of God's making, these are circumstances.

1. Of imperfection. God has placed all men in such circumstances, under a variety of wants and imperfections, *Phil.* iii. 12. We can look nowhere where we are not beset with them. There is a heap of natural and moral imperfections about us: Our bodies and our souls, in all their faculties, are in a state of imperfection. The pride of all glory is stained, and it is a shame to us not to be humbled under such wants as attend us; it is like a beggar strutting in his rags.

2. Of inferiority in relations, whereby men are set in the lower place in relations and society, and made to depend on others, *1 Cor.* vii. 24. God has, for trial of men's submission to himself, subjected them to others whom he has set over them, to discover what regard they will pay to his authority and commands at second-hand. Dominion or superiority is a part of the divine image, *1 Cor.* xi. 7. and therefore reverence of them, consisting in an awful regard to that ray of the divine image shining in them, is necessarily required, *Eph.* v. 33. *Heb.* xii. 9. compare *Psal.* cxi. 9. The same holds in all other relations and superiorities, viz. That they are so far in the place of God to their relatives, *Psal.* lxxxii. 6. And though the parties be worthless in themselves, that looseth not one from the debt to them, *Acts* xxiii. 4, 5. *Rom.* xiii. 7. The reason is, because it is not their qualities, but their character, which is the ground of that debt of reverence and subjection; and the trial God takes of us in that matter turns not on the point of the former, but of the latter.

Now, God having placed us in these circumstances of inferiority, all refractoriness in all things, not contrary to the command of God, is a rising up against his mighty hand, *Rom.* xiii. 2, because

it is mediately upon us for that effect; though it is man's hand that is immediately on us.

3. Of contradiction, tending directly to baulk us of our will. This was a part of our Lord's state of humiliation, and the apostle supposes it will be a part of ours too, *Heb. xii. 3.* There is a perfect harmony in heaven, no one to contradict another there: For they are in their state of retribution and exaltation: But we are here in our state of trial and humiliation, and therefore cannot miss contradiction, be we placed ever so high.

Whether these contradictions be just or unjust, God trusts men with them to humble them, to break them off from addictedness to their own will, and to teach them resignation and self-denial. They are in their own nature humbling, and much the same to us, as the breaking of a horse or bullock is to them. And I believe there are many cases in which there can be no accounting for them, but by recurring to this use God has for them.

4. Of affliction, *Prov. xvi. 19.* Prosperity puffs up sinners with pride; and O but it is hard to keep a low spirit with a high and prosperous lot. But God, by affliction, calls men down from their heights to sit in the dust, plucks away their gay-feathers wherein they prided themselves, rubs the paint and varnish from off the creature, whereby it appears more in its native deformity. There are various kinds of affliction, some more, some less humbling, but all of them are humbling.

Wherefore, not to lower the spirit under the affliction, is to pretend to rise up when God is casting and holding down, with a witness; and cannot miss, if continued in, to provoke the Lord to break us in pieces, *Ezek. xxiv. 13.* For the afflicting hand is mighty.

Lastly, Of sin as the punishment of sin. We may allude to that, *Job xxx. 19.* All the sin in the

world is a punishment of *Adam's* first sin. Man threw himself into the mire at first, and now he is justly left waltering in it. Men wilfully make one false step, and for that cause they are justly left to make another worse; and sin hangs about all, even the best. And this is over-ruled of God for our humiliation, that we may be ashamed, and never open our mouth any more. Wherefore, not to be humble under our sinfulness, is to rise up against the mighty hand of God, and justify all our sinful departings from him, as lost to all sense of duty, and void of shame.

III. What it is, in humbling circumstances, to *humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God*. This is the great thing to be aimed at in our humbling circumstances: And we may take it up in these eight things.

1. Noticing the mighty hand, as employed in bringing about every thing that concerns us, either in the way of efficacy or permission, 1 Sam. iii. 18. — *And he said, it is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good.* 2 Sam. xvi. 10. *And the king said, — The Lord hath said unto him, curse David: Who shall then say, wherefore hast thou done so?* He is the fountain of all perfection, but we must trace our imperfections to his sovereign will. It is he that has posted every one in their relations by his providence; without him we could not meet with such contradictions; for *the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever he pleaseth*, Prov. xxi. 1. He sends on afflictions, and he justly punishes one sin with another, Isa. vi. 10.

2. A sense of our own worthlessness and nothingness before him, *Psal. cxliv.* 3. Looking to the infinite majesty of the mighty hand dealing with us, we should say with *Abraham*, Gen. xviii. 27. *Behold I am but dust and ashes*, and say amen to the

cry, *Isa.* xl. 6.—*All flesh is grass, &c.* The keeping up of thoughts of our excellency, under the pressures of the mighty hand, is the very thing that swells the heart in pride, causing it to rise up against it. And it is the letting of all such thoughts of ourselves fall before the eyes of his glory, that is the humbling required.

3. A sense of our guilt and filthiness, *Rom.* iii. 10. *Isa.* lxiv. 6. The mighty hand doth not press us down, but as sinners; it is meet then that under it we see our sinfulness; our guilt, whereby we will appear criminals justly caused to suffer; our filthiness, whereupon we may be brought to lothe ourselves; And then we will think nothing lays us lower than we well deserve. It is the overlooking our sinfulness that suffers the proud heart to swell.

4. A silent submission under the hand of God. His sovereignty challengeth this of us, *Rom.* ix. 20. *Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?* And nothing but unsubdued height and pride of spirit can allow us to answer again under the sovereign hand. A view of the sovereign hand humbled and awed the Psalmist into a submission, with a profound silence, *Psal.* xxxix. 9. *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth? because thou didst it.* *Job* i. 21.—*The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.* And xl. 4, 5.—*What shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer: Yea, twice, but I will proceed no farther.* And *Eli*, 1 *Sam.* iii. 18. *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.*

5. A magnifying his mercies towards us in the midst of all his proceedings against us, *Psal.* cxliv.

3. Has he laid us low? If we be duly humbled, we will wonder he has laid us no lower, *Ezra* ix. 13. For however low the humble are laid, they will see

they are not yet so low as their sins deserve, *Lam. iii. 22.*

6. A holy and silent admiration of the ways and counsels of God, as to us unsearchable, *Rom. xi. 33.* Pride of heart thinks nothing too high for the man, and so arraigns before its tribunal the divine proceedings, pretends to see thro' them, censures freely and condemns: But humiliation of spirit disposes a man to think awfully and honourably of the mysteries of providence he is not able to see through.

7. A forgetting and laying aside before the Lord all our dignity, whereby we excell others, *Rev. iv. 10.* Pride feeds itself on the man's real or imaginary personal excellency and dignity, and being so inured to it before others, cannot forget it before God, *Luke xviii. 11.*—*God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men.*—But humiliation of spirit makes it all to vanish before him, as doth the shadow before the shining sun, and it lays the man in his own eyes lower than any. *Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man,* *Prov. xxx. 2.*

Lastly, A submitting readily to the meanest offices requisite in, or agreeable to our circumstances. Pride at every turn finds something that is below the man to condescend or stoop to, measuring by his own mind and will, not by the circumstances God has placed him in. But humility measures by the circumstances one is placed in, and readily falls in with what they require. Hereof our Saviour gave us an example, (*Phil. ii. 8.* *He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death*) to be imitated, *John xiii. 14.* *If I then your Lord and master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one anothers feet.*

USE. Let the bent of your hearts then, in all your humbling circumstances, be towards the humbling of your spirit, as under the mighty hand of God. This lies in two things.

1. Carefully notice all your humbling circumstances, and overlook none of them. Observe your imperfections, inferiority of relations, contradictions you meet with, your afflictions, uncertainty of all things about you, and your sinfulness. Look through them designedly, and consider the steps of the conduct of providence toward you in these, that ye may know yourselves, and may not be strangers at home, blind to your own real state and case.

2. Observing what these circumstances do require of you, as suitable to them, bend your endeavours towards it, to bring your spirits into that temper of humiliation, that as your lot is really low in all these respects, so your spirits may be low too, as under the mighty hand of God. Let this be your great aim through your whole life, your exercise every day.

Motive 1. God is certainly at work to humble one and all of us. However high they are lifted up in this world, providence has hung certain badges for humiliation on them, whether they will notice them or not, *Isa.* xl. 6. Now, it is our duty to fall in with the design of providence, that while God is humbling us, we may be humbling ourselves, and that we may not receive humbling dispensations in vain.

2. The humiliation of our spirits will not take effect without our own agency therein: While God is working on us that way, we must work together with him, for he works on us as rational agents, who being moved, move themselves, *Phil.* ii. 12, 13. God by his providence may force down our lot and condition without us, but the spirit must come down voluntarily and of choice, or not at all; therefore strike in with humbling providence in humbling yourselves, as mariners spread out the sails when the wind begins to blow, that they may go away before it.

3. If ye do not, ye resist the mighty hand of God, *Acts vii. 51.* Ye resist in so far as ye do not yield, but stand as a rock, keeping your ground against your Maker in humbling providences, *Jer. v. 3.*—*Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved: Thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction. They have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.* Much more when ye work against him to force up your condition, which ye may see God means to hold down. And of this resistance consider,

(1.) The sinfulness, what an evil thing it is. It is a direct fighting against God, a shaking off of subjection to our sovereign Lord, and a rising in rebellion against him, *Isa. xlv. 9.*

(2.) The folly of it. How unequal is the match? How can the struggle end well? *Job ix. 4.* What else can possibly be the issue of the pot sherds of the earth dashing against the Rock of ages, but that they be broken to pieces? We may say as *Job xli. 8.*—*Remember the battle, do no more.* All men must certainly bow or break under the mighty hand.

4. This is the time of humiliation, even the time of this life; *Every thing is beautiful in its season*, and the bringing down of the spirit now is beautiful, as in the time hereof, even as the plowing and sowing of the ground is in the spring. Consider,

(1.) Humiliation of Spirit is in the sight of God of great price; *1 Pet. iii. 4.* As he has a special aversion to pride of heart, he has a special liking of humility, *chap. v. 5.* The humbling of sinners, and bringing them down from their heights, wherein the corruption of their nature has set them, is the great end of his word, and of his providences.

(2.) It is no easy thing to humble mens spirits; it is not little that will do it; it is a work that is not soon done. There is need of a digging deep for a thorough humiliation in the work of conversion,

Luke vi. 48. Many a stroke must be given at the root of the tree of the natural pride of the heart ere it fall ; oft-times it seems to be fallen, and yet it rises again. And even, when the root-stroke is given in believers, the rod of pride buds again, so that there is still occasion for a new humbling work.

(3.) The whole time of this life is appointed for humiliation. This was signified by the forty years the *Israelites* had in the wilderness, *Deut. viii. 2.* It was so to Christ, and therefore it must be so to men, *Heb. xii. 2.* And in that time they must either be formed according to his image, or else appear as reprobate silver that will not take it on by any means, *Rom. viii. 29.* So that whatever lifting up men may now and then get in this life, the habitual course of it will still be humbling.

(4.) There is no humbling after, *Rev. xxii. 11.* If the pride of the heart be not brought down in this life, it will never be : No kindly humiliation is to be expected in the other life. There the proud will be broken in pieces, but not softened ; their lot and condition will be brought to the lowest pass, but the unhumbleness of their spirits will still remain, whence they will be in eternal agonies, through the opposition betwixt their spirits and lot, *Rev. xvi. 21.*

Wherefore beware lest ye sit your time of humiliation ; humbled we must be, or we are gone for ever ; and this is the time, the only time of it : Therefore make your hay while the sun shines : Strike in with humbling providences, and fight not against them while ye have them, *Acts xiii. 41.* The season of grace will not last ; if ye sleep in seed-time, ye will beg in harvest.

5. This is the way to turn humbling circumstances to a good account : so that instead of being losers, ye would be gainers by them, *Psal. cxix. 71.* *It is good for me that I have been afflicted.* Would

ye gather grapes of these thorns and thistles, set yourselves to get your spirits humbled by them.

(1.) Humiliation of spirit is a most valuable thing in itself, *Prov.* xvi. 32. It cannot be bought too dear. Whatever one is made to suffer, if his spirit is thereby duly brought down, he has what is well worth bearing all the hardship for, *1 Pet.* iii. 4.

(2.) Humility of spirit brings many advantages along with it. It is a fruitful bough, well loaden, where-ever it is. It contributes to one's ease under the cross, *Matth.* xi. 30. *Lam.* iii. 27, 28, 29. It is a sacrifice particularly acceptable to God, *Psal.* li. 17. The eye of the Lord is particularly on such for good, *Isa.* lxvi. 2.—*To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.* Yea, he dwells with them, *Isa.* lvii. 15. And it carries a line of wisdom through one's whole conduct, *Prov.* xi. 2.—*With the lowly is wisdom.*

Lastly, Consider it is a mighty hand that is at work with us; the hand of the mighty God: Let us then bend our spirits towards a compliance with it, and not wrestle against it. Consider,

(1.) We must fall under it. Since the design of it is to bring us down, we cannot stand before it, nor we cannot miscarry in its designs, *Isa.* xli. 10.

My counsel shall stand.—So fall before it we must, either in the way of duty or judgment, *Psal.* xli. 4. *Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies, whereby the people fall under thee.*

(2.) They that are so wise as to fall in humiliation under the mighty hand, be they never so low, the same hand will raise them up again, *Jam.* iv. 10. In a word, be the proud never so high, God will bring them down: Be the humble never so low, God will raise them up,

DIRECTIONS for reaching this Humiliation.

I. General DIRECTIONS.

DIRECTION 1. Fix it in your heart to seek some spiritual improvement of the conduct of providence towards you, *Mic. vi. 9.* Till once your heart get a set that way, your humiliation is not to be expected, *Hos. xiv. 9.* But nothing more reasonable, if we would act either like men or Christians, than to aim at turning what is so grievous to the flesh unto the profit of the spirit; that, if we are losers at one hand, we may be gainers at another.

2. Settle the matter of your eternal salvation, in the *first* place, by betaking yourselves to Christ, and taking God for your God in him, according to the gospel offer, *Hos. ii. 19. Heb. viii. 10.* Let your humbling circumstances move you to this, that while the creature dries up, you may go to the fountain; for it is impossible to reach due humiliation under the mighty hand, without faith in him as your God and friend, *Heb. xi. 6. 1 John iv. 19.*

Lastly, Use the means of soul humbling in the faith of the promise, *Psal. xxxviii. 6.* *Moses* smiting the rock in the faith of the promise, made waters gush out, which otherwise would not at all have appeared. Let us do so likewise in dealing with our rocky hearts: They must be laid on the soft bed of the gospel, and struck there, as *Joel ii. 13.* *Turn to the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful.* Or they will never kindly break or fall in humiliation.

II. Particular DIRECTIONS.

1. Assure yourselves that there are no circumstances so humbling that you are in, but you may get your heart acceptably brought down to them, *1 Cor. x. 13.* — *But God is faithful, who will not*

suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. This is truth, 2 Cor. xii. 9.—My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.—And you would be persuaded of it with application to yourselves, if ever you would reach the end, Phil. iv. 13. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. God allows you to be persuaded of it, whatever is your weakness and the difficulty of the task.—For our sakes this is written, that he that ploweth should plow in hope, and he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope, 1 Cor. ix. 10. And the belief thereof is a piece of the life of faith, 2 Tim. ii. 1. If you have no hope of success, your endeavours, as they will be heartless, so they will be vain. Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees, Heb. xii. 12.

2. Whatever hand is, or is not, in your humbling circumstances, do you take God for your party, and consider yourselves therein as under his mighty hand, *Mic. vi. 9.* Men in their humbling circumstances overlook God; so they find not themselves called to humility under them: They fix their eyes on the creature instrument, and instead of humility, their hearts rise. But take him for your party, that ye may remember the battle, and do no more, *Job xli. 8.*

3. Be much in the thoughts of God's infinite greatness: Consider his holiness and majesty, fit to awe you into deepest humiliation, *Isa. vi. 3, 4, 5.* *Job* met with many humbling providences in this case, but he was never sufficiently humbled under them, till the Lord made a new discovery of himself unto him, in his infinite majesty and greatness. He kept his ground against his friends, and stood to his points, till the Lord took that method with him. It was begun with thunder, *Job xxxvii. 1,*

2. Then followed God's voice out of the whirlwind, *chap. xxxviii. 1.* whereupon *Job* is brought down, *chap. xl. 4, 5.* It is renewed, till he is farther humbled, *chap. xlii. 5, 6.* *Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*

4. Inure yourselves silently to admit mysteries in the conduct of providence towards you, which you are not able to comprehend, but will adore, *Rom. xi. 33.* *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!* That was the first word God said to *Job*, *chap. xxxviii. 2.* *Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?* It took him by the heart, stuck with him, and he comes over it again, *chap. xlii. 3.* as that which particularly brought him to his knees to the dust. Even in these steps of providence, which we seem to see far into, we may well allow there are some mysteries beyond what we see. And, in these which are perplexing and puzzling, sovereignty should silence us; his infinite wisdom should satisfy, though we cannot see.

5. Be much in the thoughts of your own sinfulness, *Job xl. 4.* *Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.* It is overlooking of that which gives us so much ado with humbling circumstances. While the eyes are held that they cannot see sin, the heart riseth against them; but when they are opened, it falls. Wherefore, whenever God is dealing with you in humbling dispensations, turn your eyes, upon that occasion, on the sinfulness of your nature, heart and life, and that will help forward your humiliation.

6. Settle it in your heart, that there is need of all the humbling circumstances you are put in. This is truth, *1 Pet. i. 6.*—*Though now for a season, (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.* God brings no needless trials upon us, afflicts none but as their need requires, *Lam. iii. 33.*

For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men, That is an observable difference betwixt our earthly and heavenly father's correction, *Heb. xii. 10.—they—after their own pleasure; but he, for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.* Look to the temper of your own hearts and nature, how apt to be lifted up, forget God, carried away with the vanities of the world; what foolishness is bound up in your heart. Thus you will see the need of humbling circumstances for ballast, and of the rod for the fool's back; and if at any time you cannot see that need, believe it on the ground of God's infinite wisdom, that does nothing in vain.

7. Believe a kind design of providence in them towards you. God calls us to this, as the key that opens the heart under them, *Rev. iii. 19.* Satan suggests suspicions to the contrary, as the bar which may hold it shut, *2 Kings vi. 33.* *This evil is of the Lord, what should I wait for the Lord any longer?* As long as the suspicions of an ill design in them against us reigns, the creature will, like the worm at the man's foot, put itself in the best posture of defence it can, and harden itself in sorrow; but the faith of a kind design will cause it open out itself in humility before him.

CASE. O! if I knew there were a kind design in it, I would willingly bear it, although there were more of it; but I fear a ruining design of providence against me therein. ANS. Now, what word of God or discovery from heaven have you to ground these fears upon? None at all, but from hell, *1 Cor. x. 13.* What think you the design towards you in the gospel is? Can you believe no kind design towards you in all the words of grace there heaped up, neither? What is that, I pray, but black unbelief in its hue of hell, *Isa. lv. 1.* flying in the face of the truth of God, and making him

a liar, 1 *John* v. 9, 10, 11. The gospel is a breathing of love and good-will to the world of mankind sinners, *Tit.* ii. 11. and iii. 4. 1 *John* iv. 13. and *John* iii. 17. But ye believe it not, in that case, more than devils believe it. But if ye can believe a kind design there, ye must believe it in your humbling circumstances too; for the design of providence cannot be contrary to the design of the gospel; but contraryways, the latter is to help forward the other.

8. Think with yourselves, that this life is the time of trial for heaven, *Jam.* i. 12. *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to them that love him.* And therefore there should be a welcoming of humbling circumstances on that view, *ver.* 2:—*Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.* If there is an honourable office, or beneficial employment to be bestowed, men strive to be taken on trials for it, in hope they may be thereupon legally admitted to it: Now God takes trial of men for heaven by humbling circumstances, as the whole Bible teacheth: And shall men be so very loth to stoop to them? I would ask you,

(1.) Is it nothing to stand a candidate for glory, to be put on trials for heaven? Is there not an honour in it, an honour which all the saints have had? *Jam.* v. 11. *Behold we count them happy that endure, &c.*—And a fair prospect in it, 2 *Cor.* iv. 17. *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* Do but put the case, God should overlook you in that case, as one whom it is needless ever to try on that head; that he should order you your portion in this life, with full ease, as one that is to get no more of him: What would that be?

(2.) What a vast disproportion is there between

your trials and the glory? your most humbling circumstances, how light are they in comparison of the weight of it? The longest continued of them are but for a moment, compared with that eternal weight. Alas! there is much unbelief at the root of all our uneasiness under our humbling circumstances. Had we a clearer view of the other world, we would not make so much of the smiles or frowns of this.

(3.) What think ye of coming foul off the trial of your humbling circumstances? *Jer. vi. 29, 30.* — *The lead is consumed of the fire; The founder melteth in vain, for the wicked are not plucked away. Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them.* That the issue of it be only, that your heart appear of such a temper as by no means to be humbled; and that therefore you must and shall be taken off them, while yet no humbling appears. I think the awfulness of the dispensation is such, as might set us to our knees to deprecate the lifting us up from our humbling circumstances, ere our heart be humbled, *Isa. i. 5. Ezek. xxiv. 13.*

9. Think with yourselves, how it is by humbling circumstances the Lord prepares us for heaven, *Col. i. 12. Giving thanks unto the father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, with 2 Cor. v. 5.* The stones and timber are laid down, turned over and over, and hewed, ere they be set up in the building; and not just set up as they came out of the quarry and wood. Were they capable of a choice, such of them as would refuse the iron tool would be refused a place in the building. Pray, how think ye to be made meet for heaven, by the warm sunshine of the world's ease, and getting all your will here? Nay, sirs, that would put your mouths out of taste for the joys of the other world. Vessels of dishonour are fitted for destruction that way; but vessels of honour for

glory by humbling circumstances. I would here say,

(1.) Will nothing please you but two heavens, one here, another hereafter? God has secured one heaven for the saints, one place where they shall get all their will, wish and desire, where there shall be no weight on them to hold them down: And that is in the other world. But ye must have it both here and there, or ye cannot digest it. Why do ye not quarrel too, that there are not two summers in one year; two days in the twenty-four hours? The order of the one heaven is as firm as that of the years and days, and ye will not reverse it: Therefore chuse ye whether ye will take your night or your day first, your winter or your summer, your heaven here or hereafter.

(2.) Without being humbled with humbling circumstances in this life, ye are not capable of heaven, 2 Cor. v. 5. *Now, he that hath wrought us for the self same thing is God.*—Ye may indeed ly at ease here in a bed of sloth, and dream of heaven, big with hopes of a fool's paradise, wishing to cast yourselves just out of *Delilah's* lap into *Abraham's* bosom; but without ye be humbled, ye are not capable.

1. Of the Bible-heaven, that heaven described in the Old and New Testament. Is not that heaven a lifting up in due time? But how shall ye be lifted up that are never well gotten down? Where will all your tears be to be wiped away? What place will there be for your triumph, that will not fight the good fight? How can it be a rest to you, who cannot away with labour?

2. Of the saints heaven, *Rev. vii. 14.*—*And he said unto me, these are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.* This answers the question anent *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, and all the saints with them there; They were brought

down to the dust with humbling circumstances, and out of these they came before the throne. How can ye ever think to be lifted up with them, with whom ye cannot think to be brought down?

3. Of Christ's heaven, *Heb. xii. 2.* — *Who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God.* O consider how the forerunner made his way, *Luke xxiv. 26.* *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?* And lay your accounts with it, that if ye get where he is, ye must go hither as he went, *Luke ix. 23.* *And he said, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself; and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*

10. Give up at length with your towering hopes from this world, and confine them to the world to come. Be as pilgrims and strangers here, looking for your rest in heaven, and not till ye come there. There is a prevailing evil, *Isa. lviii. 10.* *Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; yet saidst thou not, there is no hope.* — So the Babel building is still continued, though it is fallen down again and again: For men say, *The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones: The sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars,* *Isa. ix. 10.* This makes humbling work very longsome, we are so hard to quit our grip of the creature, to fall off from the breast and be weaned. But fasten your grips on the other world, and let your grip of this go: So shall ye be humbled under the mighty hand. The faster ye grip the happiness of that world, the easier it will be to accommodate yourselves to your humbling circumstances here,

Lastly, Make use of Christ in all his offices, for your humiliation under your humbling circumstances. That only is kindly humiliation that comes in that way, *Zech. vii. 10.* *And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn,*

&c. That you must do by trusting on him for that effect.

(1.) As a priest for you. You have a conscience full of guilt, and that will make one uneasy in any circumstances, and far more in humbling circumstances; it will be like a thorn in the shoulder on which a burden is laid. But the blood of CHRIST will purge the conscience, draw out the thorn, give ease, *Isa. xxxiii. 24.* And fit for service, doing or suffering, *Heb. ix. 14.* *How much more shall the blood of Christ—purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*

(2.) As your prophet to teach you. We have need to be taught rightly to discern our humbling circumstances: For often we mistake them so far that they prove an oppressing load; whereas, could we rightly see them, just as God sets them to us, they would be humbling, but not so oppressive. Truly we need Christ, and the light of his word and spirit, to let us see our cross and trial as well as our duty, *Psal. xxv. 9, 10.*

(3.) As your king. You have a stiff heart, loth to bow, even in humbling circumstances; take a lesson from *Moses* what to do in such a case, *Exod. xxxiv. 9.* *And he said,—let my Lord, I pray thee, go amongst us (for it is a stiff necked people) and pardon our iniquity and our sin.*—Put it in his hand that is strong and mighty, *Psal. xxiv. 8.* He is able to cause it melt, and like wax, before the fire, turn to the seal.

Think on these directions, in order to put them in practice, remembering that if ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. Remember, humbling work is a work that will fill your hand, while you live here, and that you cannot come to the end of, till death; and humbling circumstances will attend you, while you are in this lower world. A change of them ye may get; but a freedom from

them ye cannot, till ye come to heaven. So the humbling circumstances of our imperfections, relations, contradictions, afflictions, uncertainties and sinfulness, will afford matter of exercise to us while here. What remains of the purpose of this text, I shall comprise in,

DOCTRINE II. *There is a due time, wherein these that now humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, will certainly be lifted up.*

We shall take,

I. A general view of this point. And consider, 1st, Some things supposed and implied in it. It bears,

1. That these who shall share of this lifting up, must lay their account, in the first place, with a casting down. *Rev. vii. 14. John xvi. 33.—In the world ye shall have tribulation.*—There is no coming to the promised land, according to the settled method of grace, but through the wilderness; nor entering into this exaltation, but through a strait gate. If we cannot away with casting down, we will not taste of the sweet of the lifting up.

2. Being cast down by the *mighty hand of God*, we must learn to ly still and quiet under it, till the same hand that cast us down, raise us up, if we would share of this promised lifting up, *Lam. iii. 27.* It is not the being cast down into humbling circumstances by the providence of God, but the coming down of our spirits under them by the grace of God, that brings us within the compass of this promise.

3. Never humbled in humbling circumstances, never lifted up in the way of this promise. Men may keep their spirits on the high bend in their humbling circumstances, and in that case may get a lifting up, *Prov. xvi. 19.* But not this, what

they get will be a lifting up, to the end they may get the more grievous fall, *Surely thou didst set them in slippery places, thou castedst them down in a moment*, Psal. lxxiii. 18. But they who will not humble themselves in humbling circumstances, will find their obstinacy a need nail, that will keep their misery ever fast on them without remedy.

4. Humility of spirit in humbling circumstances ascertains a lifting up out of them some time with the good will and favour of heaven, *Luke xviii. 14. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* Solomon observes, *Prov. xv. 5. That a soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger.* And so it is, that while the proud, thro' their obstinacy, do but wreathe the yoke faster about their own necks, the yielding humble ones, by their yielding, make their relief sure, *i Sam. ii. 8, 9, 10. He raiseth the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory—he will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail, the adversaries of the Lord shall be broken in pieces.*—So the cannon ball breaks down a stone wall, while the yielding packs of wool take away its force.

5. There is an appointed time for the lifting up of these that humble themselves in their humbling circumstances, *Hab. ii. 3. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie: Though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry.* To every thing there is a time, as for humbling, so for lifting up, *Eccl. iii. 3.* We know it not, but God knows it, who has appointed it. Let not the humble one say, I will never be lifted up: There is a time fixed for

it, as precisely as for the rising of the sun after the long and dark night, or the return of the spring after the long and sharp winter.

6. It is not to be expected, that immediatly upon one's humbling himself, the lifting up is to follow. No, one is not to ly down under the mighty hand, but ly still waiting the due time; humbling work is longsome work: The *Israelites* had forty years of it in the wilderness. God's people must be brought to put a blank in his hand, as to the time, and while they have a long night of walking in darkness, must trust, *Isa. l. 10. Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.*

7. The appointed time for the lifting up, is the due time, the time fittest for it, wherein it will come most seasonably. *And let us not be weary in well doing: For in due season we shall reap, if we faint not? Gal. vi. 9.* For that is the time God has chosen for it; and be sure his choice, as the choice of infinite wisdom, is the best; and therefore faith sets to wait it, *Isa. xxviii. 16.——He that believeth shall not make haste.* There is much of the beauty of a thing depends on the timing of it, and he has fixed that in all he does, *Eccl. iii. 11. He hath made every thing beautiful in his time.*

Lastly, The lifting up of the humbled will not miss to come in the appointed and due time, *Hab. ii. 3.* Time makes no halting, it is running day and night: So the due time is fast coming, and when it comes, it will bring the lifting up along with it. Let the humbling circumstances be ever so low, ever so hopeles, it is impossible but the lifting up from them must come in the due time.

2dly, A word in the general to the lifting up a-

biding these that humble themselves. There is a twofold lifting up.

1. A partial lifting up, competent to the humbled in time, during this life, *Psal. xxx. 1. I will extol thee, O Lord, for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.* This is a lifting up in part, and but in part, not wholly; and such liftings up the humbled may expect, while in this world, but no more. These give a breathing to the weary, a change of burdens, but do not set them at perfect ease, So *Israel* in the wilderness, in midst of their many mourning times, had some singing ones, *Exod. xv. 1. Numb. xxi. 17.*

2. A total lifting up, competent to them at the end of time, at death, *Luke xvi. 22.—It came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.—*Then the Lord deals with them no more by parcels and halves, but carries their relief to perfection, *Heb. xii. 23.* Then he takes off all their burdens, eases them of all their weights, and lays no more on for ever. He then lifts them up to a height they were never at before, no not when at the highest. He sets them quite above all that is low, and therein fixes them, never to be brought down more. Now there is a due time for both these.

(1.) For the partial lifting up. Every time is not fit for it; we are not always fit to receive comfort, an ease or a change of our burdens. God sees there are times wherein it is needful for his people to be in heaviness, *1 Pet. i. 6.* To have their heart brought down with grief, *Psal. cvii. 12.* But then there is a time really appointed for it in the divine wisdom, when he will think it is as needful to comfort them, as before to bring down, *2 Cor. ii. 7.* So that, contrariwise, ye ought rather to forgive, and comfort him, lest perhaps such an one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. We are in that

case in the hand of God, as in the hand of our physician, who appoints the time the drawing plaister shall ly to, and when the healing plaister shall be applied, and leaves it not to the patient.

(2.) For the total lifting up, When we are sore oppressed with our burdens, we are ready to think, O to be away, and set beyond them all, *Job vii. 2, 3. As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow, and as an hireling looketh for the reward of his work: So am I made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me.* But it may be fitter, for all that, that we stay a while, and wrestle with our burdens, *Philip. i. 35. Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all, for your furtherance and joy of faith.* A few days might have taken *Israel* out of *Egypt* into *Canaan*; but they would have been oversoon there, if they had made all that speed; so they behoved to spend forty years in the wilderness; till their due time of entering *Canaan* should come. And be sure the saints entering heaven, will be convinced that the time of it is best chosen, and there will be a beauty in that it was no sooner.

And thus a lifting up is secured for the humble. 3dly, The certainty of the lifting up of these that humble themselves under humbling circumstances. If one would assure you, when reduced to poverty, that the time should certainly come yet, that ye should be rich; when sore sick, that ye should not die of that disease, but certainly recover, that would help you to bear your poverty and sickness the better, and ye would comfort yourselves with that prospect. However, one may continue poor, and never be rich, may be sick and die of this disease; but whoever humble themselves under the humbling circumstances; we can assure them, from the Lord's words, they will certainly, without all peradven-

ture, be lifted up out of, and relieved from their humbling circumstances; they shall certainly see the day of their ease and relief, when they shall remember their burdens as waters that fail. And ye may be assured thereof from the following considerations.

1. The nature of God, duly considered, insures it, *Psal. ciii. 8, 9. The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plentiful in mercy. He will not always chide: Neither will he keep his anger for ever.* The humbled soul looking to God in Christ, may see three things in his nature jointly securing it.

(1.) Infinite power, that can do all things. No circumstances are so low, but he can raise them; so intangling and perplexing, but he can unravel them; so hopeless, but he can remede them, *Gen. xviii. 14. Is any thing too hard for the Lord?* Be our case what it will, it is never past reach with him to help it: But then is the most proper season for him to take it in hand, when all others have given it over, *Deut. xxxiii. 36. For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants: when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left.*

(2.) Infinite goodness inclining to help. He is good and gracious in his nature, *Exod. xxxiv. 6. — 9.* And therefore his power is a spring of comfort to them, *Rom. xiv. 4.* Men may be willing that are not able, or able that are not willing; but infinite goodness joining infinite power in God, may ascertain the humbled of a lifting up in due time. That is a word of inconceivable sweetness, *1 John iv. 10. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us, God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.* He has the bowels of a father towards the humble, *Psal. ciii. 13. Like as a father pitieth his children: So the Lord pitieth them that fear him.* Yea, bowels of mercy.

more tender than a mother to her sucking child, *Isa. xlix. 15.* Wherefore, howbeit his wisdom may see it necessary to put them in humbling circumstances, and keep them in them for a time, it is not possible he can leave them in them for altogether.

(3.) Infinite wisdom, that doth nothing in vain, and therefore will not needlessly keep one in humbling circumstances, *Lam. iii. 32, 33.* *But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies: For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.* God sends them on for humbling, as the end and design to be brought about by them: When that is obtained, and there is no more use for them that way, we may assure ourselves they will be taken off.

2. The providence of God viewed in its stated methods of procedure with its objects, insures it. Turn your eyes which way you will on the divine providence, ye may conclude thence, that in due time the humble will be lifted up.

(1) Observe the providence of God, in the revolutions of the whole course of nature, day succeeding to the longest night, a summer to the winter, a waxing to a waning of the moon, a flowing to an ebbing of the sea, &c. Let not the Lord's humbled ones be idle spectators of these things: They are for our learning, *Jer. xxxi. 35, 36, 37.* *Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea, when the waves thereof roar: The Lord of hosts is his name. If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.* Will the Lord's hand keep such a steady course in the earth, sea, and visible heavens, as to bring a lifting up in them after a casting down, and only forget his humbled ones? No.

(2.) Observe the providence of God in the dispensations about the man Christ, the most noble and august object thereof, more valuable than a thousands worlds, *Coh. iii. 9* Did not providence keep this course with him, first humbling him, then exalting him, and lifting him up, first bring him to the dust of death, in a course of sufferings thirty-three years, then exalt him to the father's right-hand in eternity of glory? *Heb. xii. 2.*—*Who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right-hand of the throne of God, Philip ii. 8, 9. And being found in fashion like a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him.*—The exaltation could not fail to follow his humiliation, *Luke xxiv. 26.* Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And he saw and believed it would follow, as the springing of the seed doth the sowing of it, *John xii. 25.* There is a near concern the humbled in humbling circumstances have herein.

(1.) This is the pattern providence copies after in its conduct towards you. The father was so well pleased with this method in the case of his own Son, that it was determined to be followed, and just copied over again in the case of all the heirs of glory, *Rom. viii. 29.* For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. And who would not be pleased to walk through the darkest valley trading his steps?

(2.) This is a sure pledge of your lifting up. Christ, in his estate of humiliation, was considered as a public person and representative, and so is he in his exaltation. So Christ's exaltation insures your exaltation out of your humbling circumstances, *Isa. xxvi. 19.* Thy dead men shall live, together with my

dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust.—Hof. vi. 1, 2. *Come and let us return unto the Lord: For he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us, and the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.* Eph. ii. 6. *And hath raised us up together, and hath made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Yea he is gone into the state of glory for us, as our forerunner, Heb. vi. 20. Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever.*—

(3.) His humiliation was the price of your exaltation, and his exaltation a full testimony of the acceptance of its payment to the full. There are no humbling circumstances ye are in, but ye would have perished in them, had not he purchased your lifting up out of them by his own humiliation, Isa. xxvi. 19. Now his humbling grace in you is an evidence of the acceptance of his humiliation for your lifting up.

(4.) Observe the providence of God towards the church in all ages. This has been the course the Lord has kept with her, *Psal. cxxix. 1.—4. Abel* was slain by the wicked *Cain*, to the great grief of *Adam* and *Eve*, and the rest of their pious children: But then there was another seed raised up in *Abel's* room after, *Gen. iv. 25. Noah* and his sons were buried alive in the ark more than a year, but then they were brought out into a new world and blessed, *Abraham* for many years went childless; but at length *Isaac* was born. *Israel* was long in miserable bondage in *Egypt*; but at length seated in the promised land, &c. We must be content to go by the footsteps of the flock: And if in humiliation, we will surely follow them in exaltation too.

(5.) Observe the providence of God in the dispensations of his grace towards his children. The

general rule is, *1 Pet. v. 5.*—*For God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.* How are they brought into a state of grace? Is it not by a sound work of humiliation going before, *Luke vi. 48.* And ordinarily the greater measure of grace is designed for one, the deeper is their humiliation before, as in *Paul's* case. If they are to be recovered out of a backslidden case, the same method is followed: So that deepest humiliations ordinarily make way for the greatest comforts, and the darkest hour goes before the rising of the Sun of righteousness upon them, *Isa. lxvi. 5,—13.*

Lastly, Observe the providence of God at length throwing down wicked men, however long they stand and prosper, *Psal. xxxvii. 35, 36.* *I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree; yet he passed away, and lo he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.* They are long green before the sun, but at length they are suddenly smitten with an east-wind and wither away; their lamp goes out with a stink, and they are put out in obscure darkness. Now, it is inconsistent with the benignity of the divine nature, to forget the humble to raise them, while he minds the proud to abase them.

3. The word of God puts it beyond all peradventure, which, from the beginning to the end, is the humbled saint's security for a lifting up, *Psal. cxix. 49, 50.* *Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction; for thy word hath quickened me.* His word is the great letter of his name, which he will certainly see to cause to shine, *Psal. cxxxviii. 2.*—*For thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name; and in all generations has been safely lippened to, Psal. xii. 6.* Consider,

(1.) The doctrines of the word, which teach faith and hope for the time, and the happy issue

the exercises of those graces will have. The whole current of scripture to these in humbling circumstances is, *Not to cast away their confidence, but to hope to the end*; and that for this good reason, that *it shall not be in vain*. See Psal. xxvii. 14. *Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: Wait, I say on the Lord*. And compare Rom. ix. 33. Isa. xlix. 23.—*For they shall not be ashamed that wait for me*.

(2.) The promises of the word, whereby heaven is expressly engaged for a lifting up to these that humble themselves in humbling circumstances. Jam. iv. 10. *Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up*. Matth. xxiii. 12.—*And he that humbleth himself shall be exalted*. It may take a time to prepare them for rising up, but that being done, it is secured, Psal. x. 17. *Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble; thou wilt prepare their heart; thou wilt cause thine ear to hear*. They have his word for deliverance, Psal. l. 15. And tho' they may seem to be forgotten, they shall not be always so; the time of their deliverance will come, Psal. ix. 18. *For the needy shall not be always forgotten: The expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever*. Psal. cii. 17. *He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer*.

(3.) The examples of the word sufficiently confirming the truth of the doctrines and promises, Rom. xv. 4. *For whatsoever things were written afore time, were written for our learning: That we, through patience and comfort of the Scripture, might have hope*. In the doctrines and promises the lifting up is proposed to our faith, to be reckoned on the credit of God's word; but, in the examples, it is, in the case of others, set before our eyes to be seen, Jam. v. 11. *Behold we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord: That the Lord is*

very pitiful and of tender mercy. There we see it in the case of *Abraham, Job, David, Paul*, and other saints; but, above all, in the case of the man *Christ*.

Lastly, The intercession of *Christ*, joining the prayers and cries of his humbled people, in their humbling circumstances, insures a lifting up for them at length. Be it so, that the proud cry not when he bindeth them, yet his own humbled ones will not do so, they will cry, *Psal. xlii. 7, 8. Deep calleth unto deep, at the noise of thy water spouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.* And though unbelievers may soon be out-wearied, and give it over for altogether, sure believers will not do so; but though they may, in a fit of temptation, lay it by as hopeless, they will find themselves obliged to take it up again, *Jer. xx. 9. Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay;* and continue to cry night and day, *Luke xviii. 7. knowing no time for giving it over till they be lift up, Lam. iii. 49, 50. Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission, till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven.* Now *Christ's* intercession being joined with these cries, there cannot miss to be a lifting up. Consider,

1. *Christ's* intercession is certainly joined with the cries and prayers of the humbled in their humbling circumstances, *Rev. viii. 3. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden senser; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, which was before the throne.* They are by the Spirit helped to groan for relief, *Rom. viii. 26.*

and the prayers and groans, which are through the Spirit, are certainly to be made effectual by the intercession of the Son, *Jam. v. 16.* And ye may know they are by the Spirit, if so be ye are helped to continue praying, hoping for your suit at last, on the ground of God's word of promise ; for nature's praying is a pool that will dry up in a long drought. It is the spirit of prayer is the lasting spring, *John iv. 14. Psal. cxxxviii. 3.* *In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.* Truly there is an intercession in heaven, on the account of the humbling circumstances of the humble ones. *Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy upon Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years? Zech. i. 12.* How then can they miss of a lifting up in due time ?

2. He is in deep earnest in his intercession for his people in their humbling circumstances. Some will speak a good word in favour of the helpless, that will be little concerned whether they come speed or not : But our intercessor is in earnest in behalf of his humbled ones ; for he is touched with sympathy in their case, *Isa. lxiii. 9.* *In all their affliction he was afflicted.*—A most tender sympathy, *Zech. ii. 8.*—*For he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye.* He has their case upon his heart, where he is in the holy place in the highest heavens, *Exod. xxviii. 29.* and he keeps exact account of the time of their humbling circumstances, be as long as it will, *Zech. i. 12.* Moreover, it is his own business ; the lifting up they are to have, is a thing that is secured to him, in the promises made to him on the account of his blood-shed for them, *Psal. lxxxix. 33, 36.* So not only are they looking on earth, but the man Christ is in heaven looking for the accomplishment of these

promises, *Heb. x. 12, 13.* But this man after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; from thenceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. How is it possible then that that looking should be baulked? Moreover, these humbling circumstances are his own sufferings still, though not in his person, yet in his members, *Col. i. 24.* *Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his body's sake which is the church.* Wherefore, there is all ground to conclude he is in deep earnest.

Lastly, His intercession is always effectual, *John xi. 42.* *And I know that thou hearest me always*—It cannot miss to be so, because he is the Father's well-beloved Son, his intercession has a plea of justice for the ground of it, *1 John ii. 1.*—*We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* Moreover, he has all power in heaven and earth lodged in him, *John v. 22.* And finally, he and his Father are one, and their will one. So, for the present time, both Christ and his Father do will the lifting up of the humble ones, but yet only in the due time.

II. I proceed to a more particular view of the point. And,

First, We will consider the lifting up as brought about in time, which is the partial lifting up. And,

1st, Some considerations for clearing the nature thereof.

1. This lifting up does not take place in every case of a child of God. One may be humbled in humbling circumstances, from which he is not to get a lifting up in time. We would not from the promise presently conclude, that we being humbled under our humbling circumstances, shall certainly be taken out of them, and freed from them ere we get to the end of our journey. For it is certain

there are some, such as our imperfections, and sinfulness, and mortality, we can by no means be rid of while in this world. And there are particular humbling circumstances the Lord may hang about one, and keep about him, till they go down to the grave, while, in the mean time, he may lift up another from the same. *Heman* was pressed down all along from his youth, *Psal.* lxxxvii, 15. others all their lifetime, *Heb.* ii, 15.

Objection. *If that be the case, what comes of the promise of lifting up? Where is the lifting up, if one may go to the grave under the weight? Ans.* Were there no life after this, there would be weight in that objection; but since there is another life, there is none in it at all. In the other life the promise will be accomplished to the humbled, as it was, *Luke* xvi. 22. Consider that the great term for accomplishing the promises, is the other life, not this. *These all died in the faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them—Heb.* xi. 13. And that whatever accomplishment of the promise is here, it is not of the nature of the stock, but of a sample or a pledge.

Question. *But then, may we not give over praying for the lifting up in that case? Ans.* We do not know when that is our case: For a case may be past all hope in our eyes, and the eyes of others, in which God designs a lifting up in time, as in *Job's*, *Job* vi. 11. *What is my strength, that I should hope? And what is mine end, that I should prolong my life?* But, be it as it will, we should never give over praying for the lifting up, since it will certainly come to all that pray in faith for it; if not here, yet hereafter. The promise is sure, and that is the commandment: So such praying cannot miss of a happy issue at length, *Psal.* l. 15. *And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou*

shall glorify me. The whole life of a Christian is such a praying, waiting life, to encourage whereunto all temporal deliverances are given as pledges, *Rom. viii. 23.* And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. And whoso observes that full lifting up at death to be at hand, must certainly rise, if he has given over his case as hopeless.

2. However, there are some cases wherein this lifting up does take place, God gives his people some notable liftings up, even in time, raising them out of remarkable humbling circumstances. The storm is changed into a calm, and they remember it as waters that fail, *Psal. xl. 1,—4.* Two things may be observed on this.

(1.) One may be in humbling circumstances very long, and sore and hopeless, and yet a lifting up may be abiding them of a much longer continuance. This is sometimes the case of the children of God, who are set to bear the yoke in their youth, as it was with *Joseph* and *David*; and of them that get it laid on them in their middle age, as it was with *Job*, who could not be less than forty at his troubles coming; but after it, lived one hundred and forty years, *Job xlii. 16.* God by such methods prepares men for peculiar usefulness.

(2.) One may be in humbling circumstances long and sore, and quite hopeless in the ordinary course of providence, yet they may get a clear and warm blink of a lifting up, ere they come to their journey's end. The life of some of God's children is like a cloudy and rainy day, wherein, in the evening the sun breaks out from under the clouds, shines fair and clear a little, and then sets. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark.—But it shall come to pass, that a

evening-time it shall be light, Zech. xiv. 6, 7. Such was the case of *Jacob* in his old age, brought in honour and comfort to *Egypt* unto his son, and then died.

(3.) Yet whatever liftings up they get in this life, they will never want some weights hanging about them for their humbling. They may have their singing times, but their songs, while in this world, will be mixed with groanings, 2 *Cor.* v. 4. *For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened.*—The unmixed dispensation is reserved for the other world: But this will be a wilderness unto the end, where there will be howlings, with the most joyful notes.

Lastly, All the liftings up the humbled meet with now, are pledges, and but pledges, samples, *arle-penny's of the great lifting up abiding them on the other side; and they look on them so.

(1.) They are really so, *Hos.* ii. 15. *And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achir for a door of hope; and she shall sing there as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.* Our Lord Jesus is leading his people now through the wilderness, and the *manna* and water of the rocks are earnestts, for the time, of the milk and honey flowing in the promised land. They are not yet come home to their Father's house; But they are travelling on the road, and Christ their elder brother with them, *Cant.* iv. 8. who bears their expences, takes them into the inns by the way, as it were, and refreshes them with partial liftings up, after which they must get to the road again. But that entertainment by the way is a pledge of the full entertainment he will afford them when come home.

Objection. *But people may get a lifting up in time,*

* Earnest.

that yet is no pledge of a lifting up on the other side: How shall I know it then to be a pledge? *Ans.* That lifting up which comes by the promise, is certainly a pledge of the full lifting up in the other world: For as the other life is the proper time of the accomplishing of the promises, so we may be sure, that when God once begins to clear his bond, he will certainly hold on till it is fully cleared. *The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me—Psal. cxxxviii. 8.* So we may say, as *Naomi* to *Ruth*, upon her receiving six measures of barley from *Boaz*, *Ruth* iii. 18.—*He will not be at rest until he have finished the work this day.* There are liftings up that come by common providence, and these indeed are single, and not pledges of more: But the promise chains mercies together, so that one got is a pledge of another to come, yea, of the whole chain to the end, *2 Sam. v. 12.*

Question. But how shall I know the lifting up to come by the way of the promise? *Ans.* That which comes by the way of the promise, does at once come the low way of humiliation, the high way of faith, or believing the promise, and the long way of waiting hope and patient continuance, *Jam. v. 7.* *Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.* Humility qualifies for the accomplishment of the promise, faith sucks the breasts of it, and patient waiting hangs by the breast till the milk come abundantly.

(2.) But no lifting up of God's children here are any more than pledges of lifting up. God gives worldly men their stock here, but his children get nothing but a sample of theirs here, *Psal. xvii. 14.* even as the servant at the term gets his fee in a round sum, while the young heir gets nothing but a few pence for spending money. The truth is, the

same spending-money is more valuable than the world's stock, *Psal. iv. 7. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.* But though it is better than that, and their services too, and more worth than all their on-waiting, yet it is below the honour of their God to put them off with it, *Heb. xi. 16.* 'But now they desire a better country, that is an heavenly: Wherefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city.'

2dly, The partial lifting up itself. What they will get, getting this lifting up promised to the humbled. Why they will get,

1. A removal of their humbling circumstances; God having tried them a while, and humbled them, and brought down their hearts, will at length take off their burden, remove the weight so long hung at them, and so take them off that part of their trial joyfully, and let them get up their back long bowed down: And this one of two ways,

(1.) Either in kind, removing the burden for good and all. Such a lifting *Job* got, when the Lord turned back his captivity, increased again his family and substance, which had both been desolated. *David*, when *Saul* his persecutor fell in battle, and he was brought to the kingdom after many a weary day's expecting one day to fall by his hand. It is easy with our God to make such turns in the most humbling circumstances.

(2.) Or in equivalent, or as good, removing the weight of the burden, that though it remain, it presses them no more, *2 Cor. xii. 9.* 'And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities.'—Though they

are not got to the shore, yet their head is no more under the water, but lifted up. *David* speaks feelingly of such a lifting up, *Psal.* xxvii. 5, 6. 'For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: In the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me, he shall set me upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: Therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord.' Such had the three children in the fiery furnace; the fire burnt, but it could burn nothing of them but their bonds: They had the warmth and light of it, but nothing of the scorching heat. Sometimes God lifts up his people this way in their humbling circumstances.

2. A comfortable sight of the acceptance of their prayers, put up in their humbling circumstances. While prayers are not answered, but trouble continued, the hangers-on about the Lord's hand are apt to think they are not accepted nor regarded in heaven, because there is no alteration in their case, *Job* ix. 16, 17. 'If I had called and he had answered me, yet would not I believe that he had hearkened unto my voice; for he breaketh me with a tempest'—But that is a mistake; they are accepted immediately, though not answered, 1 *John* v. 14. 'And this is the confidence we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.' The Lord does with them as a father with the letters coming thick from his son abroad, reads them one by one with pleasure, and carefully lays them up to be answered at his convenience. And when the answer comes, the son will know how acceptable they were to his father, *Mat.* xv. 28. So, &c.

3. A heart-satisfying answer of these prayers, so as they shall not only get the thing, but see they have it as an answer of prayer; and they will put

double value on the mercy, 1 *Sam.* ii. 1. Accepted prayers may be very long of answering, many years, as in *Abraham* and *David's* case, but they cannot miscarry of an answer at length, *Psal.* ix. 18. The time will come when God will tell out to them according to the promise, that they shall change their note, and say, *Psal.* cxvi. 1. 'I love the Lord because he hath heard my voice, and my supplication.' Looking on their lifting up as bearing the signature of the hand of a prayer-hearing God.

4. Full satisfaction as to the conduct of providence, in all the steps of the humbling circumstances, and the delay of the lifting up, however perplexing these were before, *Rev.* xv. 3. Standing on the shore and looking back to what they have past through, they will be made to say, 'He hath done all things well.' These things which are bitter to Christians in the passing through, are very sweet in the reflection on them: So is *Sampson's* riddle verified in their experience.

5. They get the lifting up, together with the interest for the time they lay out for it. When God pays his bonds of promises, he pays both stock and interest together: The mercy is increased according to the time the man waited on, and the expences and hardships sustained during the dependance of the process. The fruits of common providence are soon ripe, soon rotten; but the fruit of the promise is readily long a ripening, but then it is durable: And the longer it is a ripening, it is the more valuable when it comes. *Abraham* and *Sarah* waited for the promise about ten years, at length they thought on a way to hasten it, *Gen.* xvi. That soon took in the birth of *Ismael*, but he was not the promised son. They were coming into extreme old age ere the promise brought forth, *Gen.* xviii. 11. but when it came, they got it with an

addition of the renewing of their ages, *Gen. xxi. 7. and xxv. 1.* The most valuable of all the promises was the longest in fulfilling, *viz.* the promise of Christ, that was four thousand years.

Lastly, The spiritual enemies that flew thick and throng about them in the time of the darkness of the humbling circumstances, will be scattered at this lifting up in the promise, *1 Sam. ii. 1, 5.* 'And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies.—They that were full have hired out themselves for bread, and they that were hungry ceased.—Formidable was *Pharaoh's* host behind the *Israelites*, while they had the 'Red sea before them;' but, when they were thro' the sea, they saw the *Egyptians* dead on the shore, *Exod. xiv. 30.* Such a sight will they that humble themselves under humbling circumstances get of their spiritual enemies, when the time comes for their lifting up.

2dly, The due time of this lifting up. That is a natural question of these in humbling circumstances, 'Watchman, What of the night?' And we cannot answer it to the humbled soul, but in the general, *Isa. xxi. 11, 12.* So take these general observations on it:

1. The lifting up of the humbled will not be longsome, considering the weight of the matter: That is to say, considering the worth and value of the lifting up of the humble, when it comes, it can by no means be reckoned long to the time of it. When you sow your corns in the fields, tho' they do not ripen so soon as some garden-seeds, but you wait three months or so, yet do not think the harvest long a coming, considering the value of the crop. This view the Apostle takes of the lifting up in humbling circumstances, *2 Cor. iv. 17,* 'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal

weight of glory.' So that a believer looking on the promise with an eye of faith, and perceiving its accomplishment, and the work of it when accomplished, may wonder 'tis come on so short on-waiting. Therefore it is determined to be a time that comes soon, *Luke xviii. 7.* Soon in respect of its weight and worth.

2. When the time comes, it, and only it, will appear the due time. To every thing there is a season, and a great part of wisdom lies in discerning it, and doing things in the season thereof. And we may be sure infinite wisdom cannot miss the season by mistaking it, *Deut. xxxii. 4.* 'He is a rock, his work is perfect: For all his ways are judgment.'—But whatever God doth, will abide the strictest examination in that, as all other points, *Ecc. ii. 14.* 'I know that whatsoever God doth, it shall be for ever. Nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it. And God doth it that men should fear before him.' It is true, many times cast up to us as the due time for lifting up, which really is not so, because there are some circumstances hid to us, which renders that season unfit for the thing. Hence, *John vii. 6.*—'My time is not yet come; but your time is alway ready.' But when all the circumstances, always fore-known of God, shall come to be opened out, and laid together before us, we will then see the lifting up is come in the nick of time, most for the honour of God, and our good, and that it would not have done so wellsooner.

3. When the time comes that is really the due time, the proper time for lifting up a child of God from his humbling circumstances, it will not be put off one moment longer, *Hab. ii. 3.*—'At the end it shall speak, it will surely come, it will not tarry.' Though it tarry, it will not linger nor put off to another time. O what rest of heart would the firm faith of this afford us! there is not a child

of God but would, with the utmost carefulness, protest against the lifting up before the due time, as against an unripe fruit casten to him by an angry father, that would set his teeth on edge. Sith it is so then, could we firmly believe this point, that it will undoubtedly come in the due time, without losing of a minute, it would afford a sound rest. It must be so, because God has said it : Were the case never so hopeless, were mountains of difficulties lying in the way of it, at the appointed time it will *blow*, Hebrew, *Hab. ii. 3.* A metaphor from the wind arising in a moment after a dead calm.

4. The humbling circumstances are ordinarily carried to the utmost point of hopelessness before the lifting up. The knife was at *Isaac's* throat before the voice was heard, 2 *Cor. i. 8, 9.* ' For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, in so much, that we despaired even of life; but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.' Things soon seem to us arrived at that point: Such is the hastiness of our spirit. But things may have far to go down, after we think they are at the foot of the hill. And we are almost as little competent judges of the point of hopelessness, as of the due time of lifting up. But readily God carries his peoples humbling circumstances downward, downward, still downward, till they come to that point. Too reasons are to be noticed.

(1.) One from the explanatory cause of it. Herein God is holding the same course which he held in the case of the man Christ, the beloved pattern copied after in all the dispensations of providence towards the church, and every particular believer,

Rom. viii. 29. He was all along a man of sorrows: As his time went on, the waters swelled more, till he was brought to the dust of death; then he was buried, and the grave stone sealed; which done, the world thought they were freely quit of him, and he would trouble them no more: But they quite mistook it; then, and not till then, was the due time of lifting him up. And the liftings up that his people get most remarkable, are only little pieces fashioned after this grand pattern.

(2.) Another from the final cause, the end and design providence aims at in it, and that is to carry the believer cleanly off his own, and all created bottoms, to bottom his trust and hope in the Lord alone, *2 Cor. i. 9* — 'That we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.' The life of a Christian here, is designed to be a life of faith: And tho' faith may act more easily, that it has some help from sense, yet it certainly acts more nobly, when it acts over the belly of sense. Then is it pure faith, when it stands only on its own native legs, the power and word of God, *Rom. iv. 19, 20.* 'And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead,—neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in the faith, giving glory to God.' And thus it must do, when the matter is carried to the utmost point of hopelessness.

Lastly, Due preparation of the heart, for the lifting up out of humbling circumstances goes before the due time of that lifting up, according to the promise. It is not so in every lifting up: The liftings up of the common providences are not so critically managed: Men will have them, will want them no longer, and God flings them to them in anger, ere they are prepared for them, *Hos. xiii. 11.* 'I gave thee a king in mine anger.' They

can by no means abide the trial, and God takes them off, as reprobate silver that is not able to abide it, *Jer. vi. 29, 30.*

This due preparation consists in a due humiliation, *Psal. x. 17.* And it often takes much work to bring about this, which is another point that we are very incompetent judges of. We would have thought *Job* was brought very low in his spirit, by the providence of God bruising him on the one hand, and his friends on the other, for a long time. Yet, after all he had endured both ways, God saw it necessary to speak to himself for his humiliation, *chap. xxxviii. 1.* By that speech of God himself, he was brought to his knees, *chap. xl. 4, 5.* And we would have thought he was then sufficiently humbled, and perhaps he thought so too. But God saw a further degree of humiliation necessary, and therefore just begins anew again to speak for his humiliation, which at length laid him in the dust, *chap. xliii. 5, 6.* And when he was thus prepared for lifting up, he got it.

There are six things, I conceive, belong to this humiliation, preparatory to lifting up.

1. A deep sense of sinfulness and unworthiness of being lifted up at all, *Job xl. 4.* 'Behold I am vile, What shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.' People may be long in humbling circumstances ere they be brought this length: Even good men are much prejudiced in their own favours, and may so far forget themselves as to think God deals his favours unequally, and is mighty severe on them more than others. *Elibu* marketh this wrong in *Job* under his humbling circumstances, *Job xxxiii. 10, 11, 12.* And I believe it will be found, there is readily a greater keenness to vindicate our honour from the imputation the humbling circumstances seem to lay upon it, than to vindicate the honour of God in the jus-

tice and equity of the dispensation. The blindness of an ill natured world, still ready to suspect the worst causes for humbling circumstances, as if the greatest sufferers were surely the greatest sinners, *Luke* xiii. 4. gives a handle for this bias of the corrupt nature. But God is a jealous God, and when he appears sufficiently to humble, he will cause the matter of our honour to give way, like a sandy brae, under our feet, while we shall be obliged to *clever* * to the vindication of his.

2. A resignation to the divine displeasure as to the time of lifting up. God gives the promise, leaving the time blank as to us. Our time is always ready, and we rashly fill it up at our own hand. God does not keep our time, because it is not the due time. Hence we are ready to think his word fails; whereas it is but our own rash conclusion from it that fails, *Psal.* cxvi. 11. 'I said in my haste, all men are liars.' Several of the saints have gotten on the finger ends by this means, and thereby learned to let alone filling up that blank. The first promise was thus used by believing *Eve*, *Gen.* iv. 1. Another promise was so by believing *Abraham*, after about ten years on-waiting, *Gen.* xvi. Another by *David*, forecited, *Psal.* cxvi. 11.

If this be the case of any child of God, let them not be discouraged upon it, thinking they were over rash in applying the promise to themselves: They were only so in applying the time to the promise; a snapper that saints in all ages have made, which they repented, and saw the folly of, and let alone that point for the time to come; and then the promise was fulfilled in its own due time. Let them in such circumstances go and do likewise, leaving the time entirely to the Lord,

* Grip hastily.

3. An entire resignation as to the way and manner of bringing it about. We are ready to do, as to the way of accomplishing the promise, just as with the time of it, to set a particular way for the Lord's working of it; and if that be not kept, the proud heart is stumbled, *2 Kings v. 11*. 'But Naaman was wroth, and he went away, and said, Behold, I thought, he will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place.'—But the Lord will have his people broke off from that too, that they shall prescribe no way to him, but leave that to him entirely, as in that same case, *ver. 14*.—'He went down and dipt himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God, —and he was clean. The compass of our knowledge of ways and means is very narrow, as if one is blocked up, oft-times we cannot see another: But our God knows many ways of relief, where we know but one, or none at all; and it is very usual for the Lord to bring the lifting up to his people in a way they had no view to, after repeated disappointments from these airts whence they had great expectation.

4. Resignation as to the degree of the lifting up, yea, and as to the very being of it in time. The Lord will have his people weaned so, that however hasty they have sometimes been, that they behoved to be soon lifted up, and could no longer bear, they shall be brought at length to set no time at all, but submit to go to the grave under their weight, if it seem good in the Lord's eyes, and in that case they will be brought to be content with any measure of it in time, without prescribing how much, *2 Sam. xv. 25, 26*.—'If I should find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again.—But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him.'

5. The continuing of praying and waiting on the Lord in this case, *Eph. vi. 18.* 'Praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.'—It is pride of heart, and unsubduedness of spirit, that makes people give over praying and waiting, because their humbling circumstances are lengthened out time after time, *2 Kings vi. 33.* But due humility going before the lifting up, brings men into that temper, to pray, wait, and hang on resolutely, setting no time for the giving it over, till the lifting up come, whether in time or eternity, *Lam. iii. 49, 50.*

Lastly, Mourning under mismanagements in the trial, *Job xlii. 3.*—'Therefore have I uttered that I understood not, things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.' The proud heart dwells and expatiates on the man's sufferings in the trial, and casts out all the folds of the trial on that side, and views them again and again. But when the spirit of God comes duly to humble, in order to lifting up, he will cause the man to pass, in a sort, the suffering side of the trial, and turn his eyes on his own conduct in it, ransack it, judge himself impartially, and condemn himself; so that his mouth will be stop'd.

This is that humility going before the lifting up in time, in the way of the promise.

Secondly, We proceed to consider the lifting up, as brought about at the end of time, in the other world. And,

1st, A word as to the nature of this lifting up. Concerning it we shall say these five things.

2. There is a certainty of this lifting up, in all cases of the humbled under humbling circumstances. Though one cannot, in every case, make them sure of a lifting up in time, yet they may be assured, be the case what it will, they will, without

all peradventure, get a lifting up on the other side, 2 *Cor.* v. 1. ' For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' Though God's humbled children may both breakfast and dine on bread of adversity and water of affliction, they will be sure to sup sweetly and plentifully. And the believing expectation of the latter, might serve to qualify the former, and make easy under it.

2. It will be a perfect lifting up, *Heb.* xii. 23. They will be perfectly delivered out of their particular trials, and special furnace, be what it will, that made them many a weary day. *Lazarus* was then delivered from his poverty and sores, and lying at the rich man's gate, *Luke* xvi. 22, and fully delivered; yea, they will get then a lifting up from all their humbling circumstances together. All the imperfections will then be at an end, inferiority in relations, contradictions, afflictions, uncertainty, and sin. If it was long a coming, there will be a blessed moment when they shall get altogether.

3. They will not only be raised out of their low condition, but they will be set up on high; as *Joseph*, not only brought out of prison, but made ruler over the land of *Egypt*. And they will be lifted up,

(1.) Into a high place, *Luke* xvi. 22.—' The beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.' Now they are at best in a low place, but upon this earth: There they will be seated in the highest heavens, *Phil.* i. 23. with *Eph.* iv. 10. Often, in their humbling circumstances, they are obliged now to embrace dunghills; then they will be set with Christ on his throne, *Rev.* iii. 21. ' To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me on my throne.'—Though their belly now cleaves to the earth, and men say, Bow down, that we may pass over you, they will then be set-

sed in the heavenly mansions, above sun, moon, and stars.

(2.) Into a high state and condition, a state of perfection. Out of all their troubles and uneasinesses, they will be set in a state of rest; from their mean and inglorious condition, they will be advanced into a state of glory; their weighted and sorrowful life will be succeeded with a fulness of joy; and for their humbling circumstances, they will be clothed with eternal glory and honour.

4. It will be a final lifting up, after which there will be no more casting down for ever, *Rev. vii. 16.* When we get a lifting up in time, we are apt to imagine fondly we are at the end of our trials; but we soon find we are too hasty in our conclusions, and the cloud returns, *Psal. xxx. 6. 7.* 'In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.—— Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.' But then indeed the trial is quite over, the fight is at an end: And then is the time of the retribution and triumph.

Lastly, There will not be the least remaining uneasiness from the humbling circumstances, but, on the contrary, they will have a glorious and desirable effect. I make no question but the saints will have the remembrance of their humbling circumstances they were under here below. Did the rich man in hell remember his having five brethren on earth, how sumptuously he fared, how *Lazarus* sat at his gate, and can we doubt but the saints will remember perfectly their heavy trials? *Rev. vi. 10.* But then they will remember them as waters that fail, as the man recovered to health remembers his tossings on the sick-bed; and that is a way of remembering that sweetens the present state of health beyond what otherways it would be. Certainly the shore of the *Red sea* was the place that, of all places, was the fittest to help the *Israelites* to

sing in the highest key, *Rev.* xv. 3. And the humbling circumstances of saints on the earth will be of the same use to them in heaven.

2dly, A word to the due time of this lifting up. There is a particular definite time for it in every saint's case, which is the due time, but it is hid from us. We can only say in the general,

1. Then is the due time for it, when our work we have to do in this world is over. God has appointed every one their task, fight, trial, and work; and till that is done, we are in a sort immortal, *John* ix. 4. and xi. 9. That work is,

(1.) Doing work; work set to us by the great Master, to be done for the honour of God and the good of our fellow-creatures, *Eccl.* ix. 10. We must be content to be doing on, even in our humbling circumstances, till that be done out. It is not the due time for that lifting up, till we are at the end of that work, and so have served our generation.

(2.) Suffering work. There is a certain portion of suffering that is allotted for the mystical body, and the Head has divided to the several members their proportions thereof; and it is not the due time for that lifting up, till we have exhausted the share thereof allotted to us. *Paul* looked on his life as a going on in that, *Col.* i. 24.

2. When that lifting comes, we will see it is come exactly in the due time; that it was well it was neither sooner nor latter: For, though heaven is always better than earth, and that it would be better for us, absolutely speaking, to be in heaven than on earth; yet certainly there is a time wherein it is better for the honour of God, and his service, that we be on the earth than in heaven, *Phil.* i. 24. 'Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.' And it will be no grief of heart to them, when there, that they were so long in

their humbling circumstances, and were not brought sooner.

USE 1. Let not then the humble cast away their confidence, whatever their humbling circumstances be : Let them assure themselves there will come a lifting up to them at length ; if not here, yet, to be sure, hereafter. Let them keep this in their view, and comfort themselves with it, for God has said it, *Psal. ix. 18.* — ‘ The needy shall not always be forgotten.’ — If the night were never so long, the morning will come at length.

USE 2. Let patience have her perfect work. The husbandman waits for the return of his seed, the sea merchant for the return of his ships, and the store-master for what he calls year-time, when he draws in the produce of his flocks. All these have long patience, and why should not the Christian too have patience, and patiently wait the time appointed for his lifting up ?

Ye have heard much of the *crook in the lot*, the excellency of humbleness of spirit in a low lot, beyond pride of spirit, though joined with a high one ; ye have been called to humble yourselves in your humbling circumstances, and assured in that case of a lifting up. To conclude, we may assure ourselves ‘ God will at length break in pieces the proud, be they never so high ; and he will triumphantly lift up the humble, be they never so low.’

The UNITY of the Body of CHRIST,
and the Duties the Members owe
one to another.

Being the substance of several SERMONS,

Preached on 1 Cor. x. 17.

*For we being many, are one bread, and one body; for
we are all partakers of that one bread.*

ONE great reason why communions do so little good is, That communicants are so little concerned in one another for their spiritual welfare. And this hath its rise from their not discerning and seriously laying to heart the spiritual relation there is among them, by them avouched and publicly testified by their partaking of one bread at the communion table. People readily have some notion that it is a communion with Christ: but few consider it a communion of saints, and what duties flow from it as such. I would therefore lay this matter before you, in order to pursue the benefit of our late solemn occasion.

The scope of these words is to shew, that those who partaked of idolatrous feasts were, by that action, declared one body with idolaters. This is proven by a parity of reason, viz. That those who partake of the Lord's table, declare themselves one body with the saints. In the preceeding verse he shews the nature of the sacrament of the supper; it is the *communion of the body and blood of Christ*: A sign, seal, and appointed means of our joint feeding on a slain Saviour, like so many eagles on a slain

body. Here he shews the nature of the society of saints, for whom it is appointed, *viz.* That they are one body, *viz.* the body of Christ; and therefore being united to him, they have certainly communion in his body and blood. 'For we being many, are one bread and one body: For we are all partakers of that one bread.'

In the words are two things,

1. The spiritual conjunction and communion of saints among themselves asserted; *we many*, &c. He speaks of the whole multitude of believers. They being many particular saints, some men, some women, teachers, taught, weak, strong, are yet so joined, and have such intimate union and communion one with another, that they are one bread, *i. e.* one body represented by the one sacramental bread. If ye ask whose is that body? or who is the head of it? It is Christ's, 1 *Cor.* xii. 27. 'Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.' Not his natural body, but his mystical body; And therefore the many are not such as meet at one communion-table in one congregation, but all the members of Christ's mystical body through the world; for Christ has but one body; and as many grains do make up but one sacramental bread, so they being many, do make up but one body.

2. This spiritual conjunction and communion of saints among themselves, inferred from all their partaking of that one bread; *For we being many, are one bread*, &c. By that one bread is meant, that bread which is exhibited in the sacrament, *viz.* both the invisible bread, which is Christ himself, and the visible bread which we take into our mouths, the latter the sign of the former. Believing communicants partake of both; they partake of that bread, which is the Lord; so are all united to, and hold communion with the head as members, and therefore are one body among themselves: They partake

of the sacramental bread, which is an instituted sign of the other, and thereby profess their communion with Christ the head, and consequently their communion with the saints, as members of the same body with them. And, in this last, hypocritical communicants join with them, by their partaking, declaring and avouching themselves to be of the communion of saints of the mystical body of Christ, and binding themselves to the duty of that communion; although in reality they are not so, as not partaking of the invisible bread, which is Christ the Lord. The case is the same as to baptism. 'For by one spirit we are all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles,' 1 Cor. xii. 13.

The point to be handled is this *doctrine*.

Doctr. There is a communion of saints among themselves, as being conjoined into one mystical body of Christ, declared and avouched by partakers of the sacraments, especially that of the Lord's supper, every one for themselves.

There are two parts of this *doctrine*. One is, that there is such a strait and intimate communion and conjunction among the saints, that they are really and truly one body mystically, however many they be. The other is, that one's partaking of the sacrament is a declaring and avouching himself to be of that communion. By a communion I mean, a society having a common interest in things.

I. I shall enquire into the nature of the communion of saints as one body. And,

1st, Who are the members of this communion—of this happy society, the body of Christ? There are two sorts of members of it, some in shew only, some in reality. As to the former I offer two things.

1. The openly wicked and profane, amongst whom must be reckoned the grossly ignorant, and all such as have no form of godliness, are not so much as visible or apparent members of the communion of saints. They are excluded from the communion of the saints above, *Gal. v. 19, 20, 21.* 'Now the works of the flesh are manifest—adultery, fornication, &c.—Of the which I tell you before, as I have told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.' From the communion of the saints below, *Acts xxvi. 18.* 'To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light—that they may receive inheritance among them that are sanctified'—and visibly belong to the devil's family, *John viii. 44.* What though they have been baptised, and are yet in the visible church, they have in effect renounced it, *Rom. ii. 25.*—'But if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.' For though they were baptised unto this one body, *1 Cor. xii. 13.* yet they will have no communion with that body, nor the head of it. Though they got on Christ's mark of baptism in their infancy, they have now got the devil's mark on above it. So *Rom. ii. 25.* therefore not to be admitted to the Lord's table, *Matth. vii. 6.* 'Give not that which is holy unto dogs.'—

2. Masked hypocrites are seeming visible members of this communion, but not real members of it. They are brethren of the saints, but only half brothers, *Cant. i. 6.* False brethren, *Gal. ii. 4.* They are among them, and communicate among them, but they are not of them, *1 John ii. 19.* But they want the wedding garment; and though the servants cannot but admit them as visible saints, the Master will throw them out, as none of that communion in his sight, *Matth. xxii. 12.*

Hypocrites belong to the mystical body, as a

branch bound up, but not knitting with the stock, belongs to the tree, or as a tree-leg belongs to the body, but not otherways. See the case of these members in these three things.

(1.) They are useful for the mystical body of Christ with their gifts, as the tree-leg with its strength to the natural body. So was *Judas* and *Demas*, &c. Graceless well-gifted ministers and professors, may have a mouth to speak for truth, ay and hands to act for it too, and the profit redound to the saints not themselves, who have no heart to embrace it in reality; and to adorn the communion as long as they keep green, as such branches do the tree, by which God is honoured before the world, *Psal.* lxxxvi. 15.

(2.) They are under the particular care of the body, as the tree-leg—and the branch under the gardener's inspection. Hence they get their gifts increased for the good of the body, are preserved from many snares they would otherways fall into, if they had nothing at all to do with the communion of saints, as may appear from the way they go when they turn apostates. They fare the better they are in good company. But,

(3.) They are laid aside at length, as the branch, *John* xv. 2. and the tree-leg, if not before, yet at the time when the body goes to rest, *Psal.* cxxvi. 5. Though the living leg be broken, so crazed that for the time it can be of no discernable use for the head, nor for the other members of the body, it is not cast by, nor separate from the body, but its weakness born with, and it is healed at length. But the tree-leg goes for altogether.

As to the latter, there are three sorts of these real members,

1. Real members in God's design, but not yet formed. These are all the elect, who are yet to be born, or yet to be born again, and we cannot

have a full view of the body without eyeing them, *Eph. i. 10.* 'That in the dispensation of the fulness of time, he might gather together in one, all things in Christ.'—They shall all of them be formed at length, all conjoined unto the body, and they all belong to the perfection of the body, for carrying on of which the ministry is appointed, *Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13.* For the body of Christ is all the elect knit to him as the head, *Eph. v. 23.* 'For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.'—

2. Real members, already perfected, at least as to their souls. These are the saints triumphant, who are with us members, fellow-members of the body of Christ, though glorified ones, Therefore, *Heb. xii. 22, 23.* 'But ye are come—to the general assembly and church of the first born—and to the spirits of just men made perfect.' Even they, as high as they are, are of this communion of saints, of the same family of heaven with us militant on earth, though they are in the upper rooms, and we in the lower, *Eph. iii. 15.*

3. Real members formed, but not perfected yet. These are the saints on earth, even all of them upon the face of the earth, whatever particular visible church they belong to; at whatever distance they are from one another, though they never saw, nor ever will see one another's face till they come to meet in glory, they are all one body, all members of that one body of Christ, *1 Cor. xii. 12.* 'For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members—being many are one body, so also is Christ.'

These last are they whom our text speaks of, as one body partaking of the sacramental bread, *viz.* The body of Christ, as to that part of it which is on earth; and of this we speak. So there is a communion of saints on earth, and all the saints

are members of it ; wherever they dwell, whatever lesser points of doctrine, worship, &c. they differ in, they have communion with one another, as being all conjoined into one body.

II. Wherein this communion of saints consists ; or how they are in one body.

1. They have all one head, *viz.* The Lord Jesus Christ, who is the head of all the saints, *Eph.* i. 22. 23.—‘ and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body.’—They are all united to him by his spirit, *1 Cor.* vi. 17.—‘ He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.’ And from him, as their head, they derive vital influences, *Col.* ii. 19. ‘ from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.’ There may be great difference betwixt members, in respect of growth, liveness, and usefulness ; but the meanest have communion with the highest in one head, which is common to them all. So they are all under the direction, government, and influence of Jesus Christ, as their common head.

2. They are all animated, enlivened, and actuated by one spirit, *viz.* the holy spirit of Christ. This spirit dwells in Christ as the head, and in all the saints as his members, *Rom.* viii. 9. and unites them to the head, and among themselves too, so that they are one body, *1 Cor.* xii. 13. A tree-leg though bound close to the body, is no member of it, because it is not animated by the soul and life of that body ; but if there were a body of a man, whose head did reach the clouds, any toe of that man’s foot, though defiled by the ground it toucheth, is as really a member of that body as the shoulders are, having communion with them in the same soul or spirit which actuates the one as well as the other.

Great is the difference of the saints souls, or spirits as men and women; some are bold, some fearful. It is as easy for some to draw the sword in Christ's quarrel, as for others to speak a word for him. Some are of clear, cheerful, easy, active spirits; some under a spirit of heaviness and indisposition for action; but, as saints, they have all one spirit. Whoso could discern, how unanimously they vote Christ to be the king of the heart, of the church, of the world, against the torrent of solicitations from the devil, the world, and flesh; how, as with one eye, they look up to God in Christ as their only-happiness, and away from the world which the rest of mankind fix their eye on; how with one heart and one soul they all groan under the remains of sin, and for perfection in holiness, though some louder than others; he behoved to say, these all have one spirit of faith, holiness, and contempt of the world, *Ezek. xxxvi. 27. Numb. xiv. 24.*

3. One grace of faith wrought by the self-same spirit in them all, *Col. ii. 12.* terminates in and knits them to one head, the Lord Jesus, *Eph. iii. 17.* As all the lines drawn from the circumference meet in the centre, and there have communion: So the faith of all God's elect meet in Jesus Christ, and thus they have communion among themselves, *Tit. ii. 1,—4.* Thus they are one body, as being all knit to the head, by one and the same spiritual band or kind. The strong faith grips here, the weak faith reacheth to him; though the weak hand of faith is not so steady, nor grips so hard as the other, yet both knit, *Cant. iv. 9.* and *v. 1.*

4. They have all one heart and mind in respect of fundamentals, *Eph. iv. 5.* One faith, *viz.* of doctrine, the substance of which was and ever will be the same, *Heb. xiii. 8.* Whatever be their different sentiments as to inferior truths, they all

agree in the main, *Acts* iv. 12. 'Neither is there salvation in any other; For there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.' Thus, according to the promise, *Jer.* xxxii. 39. They have 'one heart and one way;' for they are all partakers of that one unction which teacheth all things necessary to salvation, 1 *John* ii. 20. 'But ye have an unction from the holy one, and ye know all things,' for they are all taught of God: And that doctrine which contradicts the experience of the saints, and relishes not with discerning souls exercised to godliness, is justly to be suspected, *Matth.* xi. 19.—
'Wisdom is justified of her children.'

5. They are united to one another in love, *Col.* iii. 14 *Eph.* iv. 16. 'This is a powerful cement. Love cements hearts and souls, and so knits fast. They love one another, though they never saw others faces, if they do but know there are such persons in the world. They love them for the common image of God which they bear; and in all the company of saints this love will break over all the differences in lesser matters among them; so that it is made a mark of a member of that communion, 1 *John* iii. 14. 'We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.'

Lastly, They have a communion in one another's gifts and graces, as the case stands in the natural body, *Eph.* iv. 16. There is a diversity of gifts and offices in the common body of saints. Some are teachers, some taught; rulers, ruled. Some excel in one gift or grace, some in another: Some perhaps cannot be said to excel their fellow-saints in any thing: But all these are for the common advantage of the body, 1 *Cor.* xii. 27. and the glory of the head. And, wherever they are, they belong to the whole body, as the light that is in

the eye, the strength in the arms, the swiftness in the legs, belong to, and are for the good of the whole body, 1 Cor. iii, 22, 23. 'Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's.' And even the meanest member and gift has its own use and necessity. See 1 Cor. xii, 13. and downwards.

USE. Here is a fellowship you may all partake of, and I invite you all to the communion of saints, 1 John i. 3. 'That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us.' Many are ruined with their love of what they call good fellowship. What's the fellowship deserves that name? Not the communion of sinners ruining one another, under the influence of Satan and their lusts; not the fellowship of drunkards and revellers, whose common profit and pleasure goes away *like the cracklings of thorns*—only that it leaves a stink behind; not the fellowship of the men of the world, in advancing some temporal gain; but the communion of saints, the pleasantest, richest, best fellowship in all the world. O! leave the communion of sinners for this; come out from among them, and be separate, joining yourselves to this communion.

III. The properties of this communion.

1. It is a most honourable communion, for it is a communion with the holy Trinity, 1 John i. 3. —'And truly our fellowship is with the Father; and with his Son Jesus Christ.' And,

(1.) The Father is the head and father of the communion, Eph. iv. 6. 1 Cor. xi. 3. He is Father creator of all men, Acts xvii. 29. But of the communion of saints he is Father by a special, gracious, saving relation. So that they are all his children, John i. 12. 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. And they have communion with him, and union through

the Lord Jesus Christ, since he and the Father are one.

(2.) The centre of this communion is the Son, the blessed mediator. In him all meet, *1 Cor. xi. 3.* The saints meet in Christ as their head, and in him the Father meets with them, *2 Cor. v. 19.* —‘God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.’ —Christ presents all believers through the world unto his Father, saying, ‘Behold, I, and the children, which God hath given me,’ *Heb. ii. 13.* So being the Mediator’s, they become his, *John xx. 17.* In this respect Christ is called the way to the Father, *John xiv. 6.* —‘I am the way, the truth and the life: No man cometh unto the Father but by me.’

(3.) The Holy Spirit is the eternal original bond of this communion, knitting all the members to Christ and among themselves, *Eph. iv. 4.* He brings them together unto Christ, and to his Father, fixes and holds them there by his infinite power, that they can never be broken off again. So believers, members of this communion, have communion with the Father and the Son, *1 John i. 3.* and the Holy Ghost, *2 Cor. xiii. 14.*

2. It is a most rich communion. There are societies and companies this day joining stocks together, to advance worldly wealth, but the richest of them have nothing but trifles in comparison with the company or communion of saints. The communion of saints is the company trading to heaven, and their wealth is past reckoning. For a view of it consider only these two things,

(1.) They have communion with Christ, a common interest with him who is heir of all things, so that they may set their name under his, on all that is his. They have communion with him in his perfect righteousness, *Isa. xlv. 24.* Hence they are

all fair, *Cant.* iv. 7. Clear as the sun, *Cant.* vi. 10. In his active obedience, so that they have obeyed in Christ, as they sinned in Adam, *Rom.* viii. 3, 4. in his sufferings and death, *Gal.* ii. 20. in his resurrection and ascension, *Eph.* ii. 6. and glory, compare *Heb.* vi. 20. They have a common interest in all his purchase, and as poor as some of them sit, they want nothing, but are compleat, *Col.* ii. 10. 'And ye are compleat in him.'

They have a real participation of Christ himself, *Heb.* iii. 14. of his death and resurrection, *Rom.* vi. 4, 5. of his spirit, *Philip.* ii. 1. of the divine nature, 2 *Pet.* i. 4. of his offices, they are prophets, *Psal.* cv. 15. priests and kings, *Rev.* i. 6. and of his fulness, *John* i. 16.

(2.) They have communion with God, for so runs the covenant, *I will be your God*, and *Psal.* cxliv. 15. God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is theirs. All his attributes are theirs, the power of God to protect them, the wisdom of God to guide them, &c, and with him all things, since all is his, and he is theirs, 1 *Cor.* iii. 21, 22, 23.

Behold the riches of this company. And, 1. None of the saints bring any thing with them to put into the stock; but they are admitted freely. 2. Not only is a part for every one, but each one has all; and so it may be, since the stock is infinite.

3. It is a most extensive communion. And it extends,

(1.) Over the earth, and so is called the catholic, or universal church, 1 *Cor.* i. 2. Though vast tracts of land and huge seas interpose betwixt them, though they have different languages, so that some of them cannot understand what others say, and their customs are very different, yet none of all these hinder their being members of one and the same body.

(2.) To the heavens. The saints above belong to the communion of saints, *Heb.* xii. 23. ay, and the holy angels too, in the same sense, *ver.* 22. for the head of the saints is the head of angels too, *Col.* ii. 10.

Lastly, It is a holy communion. It is a fellowship of saints, *Eph.* ii. 19.—‘Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and household of God.’ The head, centre and bond, and members of this communion, are all holy. They are a society set apart for God, drawn out of the world, lying in wickedness, walking in the way of holiness, with displayed banners towards the holy land.

Doff. II. That one’s partaking of the sacrament is a declaring and avouching himself to be of that communion. By partaking of baptism we have all done it once; and by the Lord’s supper it is done as oft as we communicate in it. By the former in our infancy, it is done with our virtual consent; by the latter with our express consent. This point will be clear, if we consider the relation the sacrament has to the communion of saints.

1. It is a sign and badge of the communion of saints, *We are one bread*, says the text. The one bread signifying that we are one body; and by receiving the sign, and wearing the badge of the society, we declare two things, according to the nature of a distinguishing sign.

(1.) That we are no more of the communion of the world lying in wickedness which is the opposite society, *1 Cor.* x. 21. ‘Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and the table of devils.’ That we have left our Father’s house and people, and are no more to share with them in their way and manner of life. It is the putting on the sign of Zion’s king, that we may be distinguished from those that belong to the enemy.

(2.) That we are henceforth of the communion of saints, and not neutrals, *Rev.* xiv. 1. That we have joined ourselves to that blessed society of saints, the head of which is Jesus Christ, to take part with them for better and worse. We have said to them as *Ruth* to *Naomi*, *Ruth* i. 16,—‘Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.’

2. It is a seal of the communion of saints, and seals it effectually to all that do sincerely take hold of the covenant, *Rom.* iv. 11. The righteousness of faith is the possession of the society of saints, and the sacrament sealing that to a man, seals his being of that communion. A believer may be sore pressed with that question, ‘How shall I put thee among the children?’ But the sacrament, to put it out of doubt, seals and confirms his being put among them. Their being one body is sealed by their partaking of one bread. So, *1 Cor.* xii. 13.

3. The sacraments are the external bonds of this communion, whereby they are visibly embodied into one select society, *1 Cor.* xii. 13. And hence it is that the uncircumcised under the Old Testament were to be cut off from their people. The church of God makes a visible society in the world; and it is not the hearing of the word that is the bond of it, for that is left common to any who will. But the sacraments which are not to be given but to visible believers.

4. It is an engagement to the duties of this communion of saints, ‘I therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called, in one hope

of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, *Eph. iv. 1.—5.* Whosoever is embodied in a regular society, by his entering into it, is obliged to walk by the rules of it. And so the sacrament is an engagement or oath to walk by the rules of holiness, which are the rules of the communion of saints.

Now, whosoever doth receive the public sign, seal, bond and engagements of a society, does thereby publicly declare and avouch himself to be of that society: But by partaking of the sacrament, the partakers do take on the public sign—of the communion of saints: Therefore, &c.

USE. I draw some practical inferences from this doctrine.

Inf. I. There is a very near and special particular relation among the partakers of the sacraments, visibly constitute by their joint partaking of them. They do thereby declare themselves to be of one body, the head whereof is Jesus Christ: Even baptism alone constitutes this special relation, *1 Cor. xii. 13.* for by that holy sign the baptized are distinguished from those without the visible church, and have all given up their names to Christ. Much more does the receiving of the Lord's supper also, as faith the text.

As for the invisible real members of the communion of saints, *i. e.* the real members of the invisible church, God alone certainly knows them in particular. But the visible members of it are saints by profession, not visibly contradicted by their habitual practice, *Rom. i. 7. 1 Thess. v. 5.* 'Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: We are not of the night, nor of darkness. Amongst these there is a special relation, as one visible body of Christ; those who are only baptized, though they may be compleat members of the invisible body, being only incompleat members

of the visible ; and such as partake of the sacrament of the supper, compleat ones, as admitted unto all external privileges of the communion of saints, even the highest of them, which is that of the Lord's table. And therefore there is a more full relation amongst communicants than others. Hence I would say,

1. Ye who are baptized, yet openly wicked and profane, are grossly ignorant of the fundamentals of religion, being come to years, are apostates in effect, having by your way visibly cut off yourselves from the communion of saints. For in your infancy you were baptized into that body, but now by your unholy lives ye openly declare yourselves to be none of it, and have taken on the devil's mark, and declare yourselves to be of the world lying in wickedness, *Rom. ii. 25.* To you I say,

(1.) Have you not thus openly rejected communion with God, that you may maintain communion with the world? If you will have nothing ado with the family of heaven, do ye not renounce the Father of it for your father? If you would be none of Christ's mystical body, do ye not refuse him for a head? Yea, sure, 1 *John i. 3.*

(2.) Had it not been better for you, if ye repent not, to have lived and died among Pagans, where the name of Christ was never heard, than to have been baptized into one body with the saints, and yet cast off all by your openly profane life? 2 *Pet. ii. 21.* ' For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

2. Ye who are saints by profession, yet only baptized, not partakers of the Lord's table, Why do ye continue so? Who is there that values a communion or society, and does not endeavour to partake of all the privileges thereof that may be of

use to them? And if ye have any value for the communion of saints, why do ye not lay out yourselves to be one bread with them? Sift your consciences before the Lord, and it will not be excused from contempt of communion with Christ; with his mystical body, and the means thereof.

3. Ye who are saints by profession, and both baptized and partakers of the Lord's table, your external privilege is great; ye stand visibly related to the communion of saints, as visible members thereof. What a sad miss will it be, if ye fail of real membership, and all your interest in it be but shew and pretence, as it will be, if ye be not real saints. It will be a poor plea at the great day, *Luke xiii. 27.* — 'We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.'

(1.) The society ye are visible apparent members of, is the mystical body of Christ, enriched with the highest special privileges of communion with the holy Trinity, to their eternal happiness. It will be a sad matter for you to cheat yourselves with a shew and semblance only of partaking with them; with the empty name, while you have nothing of the thing, *Gal. vi. 3.* 'For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.'

(2.) Ye are not far from the kingdom of God. Will ye lose it for not going forward the other step, the main step? Ye have gone through the several gates of the outer court of religion, the door of the inner court stands open to you. Will ye not enter in there where the great glory of the house lies? *2 Tim. iii. 7.* The form of godliness will carry you all the length ye have gone in these externals; but the power of it is necessary to evidence you a real member of that body.

(3.) Ye will lose your good company ere long, if ye get not a surer holding than mere visible

membership ; if ye be not bound up with them by the spirit of holiness dwelling in you, as in them, the external bands of sacraments will not do, *John xv. 2.* ‘ Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away.’ (1.) Ye may fall, 2 *Tim. ii. 18, 19.* out from among them, while ye live, by apostacy, losing your fair leaves of a profession as well as fruit, 1 *John ii. 19.* ‘ They went out from us, but they were not of us ; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us.’ (2.) Ye will certainly be separated from among them at death, *Psal. cxxv. 5.* and at judgment, *Matth. xxv. 32.*

4. Ye who are real saints, baptized with the Holy Ghost, and partakers of the invisible bread, as well as of the visible bread in the Lord’s supper, and the outward baptism, happy are ye in the thorough relation ye have with the communion of the saints. Ye are members of it to all intents and purposes, true and real members of the mystical body of Christ. Who can express the happiness of this privilege ! I name only these,

(1.) Ye have past the gulph as to condemnation *Rom. viii. 1.* Ye are set beyond the reach of the condemning law ; the curse is removed, and ye have got your father’s blessing, and ye shall be blest for time and eternity.

(2.) Ye are most honourably related, of the blood royal of heaven, since ye are of the mystical body of Christ. Christ’s father is your father, *John xx. 17.*—‘ I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’ Himself is your head, *Eph. i. 22, 23.* his spirit is the bond of your mystical union with him, *Eph. iv. 4.* the church is your mother, and ye are her true and genuine children, *Gal. iv. 26.* the glorified saints are your own brethren, come to their full stature, and ye are the little ones of the same family, *Eph. iii. 15.*

ay, and the angels too are so, *Rev.* xix. 10. All these fall to you by that membership.

(3.) Ye are infinitely enriched, for on that society, whereof ye are members, all things are settled by the God of all, *1 Cor.* iii. 21.—‘All things are yours.’ The purchase of the head belongs to the members, and they have a title to all, and possess all, in their head, *Col.* ii. 10. So ye are heirs of the world to come, heirs of glory, *Rom.* viii. 17. The covenant is your charter, the sacraments the seals of it,

(4.) Ye are perfectly secured, ye shall never perish, come what will come, *John* iii. 16.—‘God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ Christ’s natural body saw no corruption, even in a grave; and Christ’s mystical body cannot perish, nor any member of it, *John* xiv. 19.—‘Because I live ye shall live also.’ Ye are secured against,

(1.) Falling off. The tree-leg may fall off from the body, but the live leg cannot: So hypocrites may fall away totally and finally, but the believer cannot, because a living member of Christ’s body, *John* x. 28.—‘I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.’ A saint may fall down in a mire, he may fall back, but never fall off, nor fall away.

(2.) Cutting off. It is true a child of God, as to his spiritual state, may be sick and sore; he may be bruised, wounded, and broken at such a rate, that he is of little or no use for the head or for the body, but paining and bringing grief to both; and so think he is cut off, *Psal.* lxxxviii. 16. ‘Thy fierce wrath goeth over me, thy terrors have cut me off.’ But no man will ever yield to the cutting off a member of his body, while it is in his power to

cure it: And therefore, forasmuch as no case of a saint is beyond the reach of the Great Physician's skill, be their case what it will, they shall be cured at length, but never cut off.

(3.) Dying off, Spiritual death can never overtake them again; the infinite Spirit, the bond of the union, will always preserve the communication betwixt the head and members, *John* xiv. 19. and temporal death cannot dissolve the union; though it separate betwixt soul and body, each of them still remains united to Christ, 1 *Thess.* iv. 14. All these things are sealed by the sacrament.

Inf. II. The sacramental declaration is a matter of such weight, as deserves the deepest impression in one's spirit, and the tenderest regard in one's life, for all time thereafter. What that is ye have already heard, *viz.* a solemn declaration made by one's partaking, that he is of the communion of the saints, joined with them into one mystical body of Christ. This is the declaration ye made by your act of partaking, and this is what, I say, deserves the deepest impression, &c. This will be clear, if ye consider,

1st, The subject-matter of that declaration, which is most important. It concerns the mystical body of Christ, and their joining themselves unto it. Is it possible that one can have a weightier matter than that in hand? Does not eternity depend upon it? Heaven or hell hang upon it to thy soul? Can any rational man think that to be a matter for one to play with, not to be in deepest earnest about it!

2^{dly}, The parties to whom it is made, God and all the saints. The Lord has erected the saints into a society under Christ the alone head, they have their patent in heaven, and God has endowed them with the richest privileges. He sends out the gospel proclamation, inviting all to join them, and offering them admission into it freely, withal, ma-

king the partaking of the sacraments to be their declaration of entering into it, 1 *Cor.* xii. 13. So it is evident the partaker, by the action, says unto God, *Isa.* xliv. 5,—‘I am the Lord’s’—and to all the saints, *Zech.* viii. 23.—‘We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you.’ If ye think light of making that declaration to them, do but consider the day when the Lord and all his saints shall judge the world, and call you to an account of the declaration made to themselves.

3dly, The nature of that declaration. It is not indeed verbal, but real; not by words, but by an action, but that instituted by Christ, and so interpreted by him as importing what it was designed to signify. As it is sacramental, it is of the nature of an oath, wherein God is invocated as judge and witness of the sincerity of your declaration. So that ye have in effect sworn yourselves of the communion of saints: And that is weighty.

4thly, The solemnity of it. It was not a business huddled up in secret, but done openly: The sacraments are public actions of their own nature: And therefore our church has wrestled against private baptism and private communion. Ye were, I suppose, baptised in presence of the church, a lesser or greater number present. Ye did communicate in the Lord’s Supper in the face of the sun, and before many witnesses, in a most solemn manner. It was a very solemn covenanting betwixt God and *Abraham*, *Gen.* xv. 9,—18. And your covenant-declaration was over the broken body and shed blood of Christ, represented in the sacrament. What greater solemnity could there be?

Lastly, The amount of it. If ye do not sincerely cleave to it, but in your practise cast it behind your back, it will amount to a lie made to God himself, and to all his saints, in a matter of the utmost weight, with the greatest solemnity, yea, to

the guilt of perjury in effect. *Ananias* and *Sapphira* were struck dead for a lie made in the matter of the price of their land: What will be the punishment of a lie made with such solemnity to God, over the broken body of his Son? *Mat.* xxiv. 51. 'He shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites'—compared with *Jer.* xxxiv. 18, 19, 20.—'I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant,—which they have made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof—I will even give them into the hands of their enemies, and into the hands of them that seek their life'—Wherefore,

1. Reflect on, and seriously consider what ye have avouched solemnly in partaking of the sacraments. Think on the action deeply, and the import of it, and impress it on your spirits. Look back all of you to your baptism.

Consider that in your baptism you were given up to Christ, to lay hold on him by faith, *Acts* xix. 4. That therein ye declared and avouched your putting on Christ, *Gal.* iii. 27. 'For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ.' Your dying to sin, and living to righteousness, *Rom.* vi. 3, 4. 'Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ, were baptised into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: That like as Christ was raised from the dead—even so we also should walk in newness of life.' Your being of the mystical body of Christ, *1 Cor.* xii. 13. 'For by one spirit we are all baptised into one body'—If people would seriously consider the import of their baptism, they who think themselves loose by their not being communicants, would see they are bound already; and that they do but cheat themselves in thinking, by the neglect of the supper, to keep off these bands, which they are already firmly under; the which, if they re-

gard not, they will hear of it afterwards to their cost.

Look back, communicants, to your partaking: Consider what ye have done. Ye have declared yourselves well pleased with the device of salvation through a crucified Christ, your taking him to be your head and ruler, your joining yourselves to him by faith, as lively members of his mystical body: That you are no more henceforth to be of the communion of the world lying in wickedness, but for the Lord only, wholly and for ever; to take your part with the saints in the world, whatever your lot be, *Psal.* xlv. 10. Ye have said all this, and in effect sworn it, over the broken body and shed blood of Christ, before angels and men.

Ye would do well to take some time alone to reflect on this, and to revive the impressions. We find the saints making reflections, and putting themselves in mind of what they have done in such a case, *Psal.* xvi. 2. 'O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord.' And *Psal.* exix. 57, 106. 'I have sworn, and I will perform it—that I will keep thy righteous judgments.'

2. Never forget it, *Jer.* i. 5. People use not to forget their marriage-day, and the transactions of it. But, alas! the declared marriage-consent to Christ is often forgotten, notwithstanding of the solemnity at it, *Jer.* ii. 32. 'Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me, days without number.' They are men of prostituted consciences, who forget their oaths, and have wrought themselves clean of the impressions of them. But, alas! there are many who sometimes made this solemn declaration, who seem to have quite forgot it, and the impressions are razed. But ye have forgot it? God hath sworn he will never forget it, *Amos* viii. 7. 'The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, sure-

ly I will never forget any of their works.' See *Jer. ii. 2.*

3. Remember it afresh on particular occasions, and awe your spirits with it, when temptations offer to cause you to go against it. Remember it as *Jephthah* did his vow, *Judg. xi. 35.*—'I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back.'

(1.) When your old lusts come back, and fawn on you: No doubt they will come, but deny them, *1 Pet. i. 14.* 'As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts, in your ignorance.' Remember ye have solemnly declared against them of your own accord, and to go back to them must be to go over the belly of God's bands on you.

(2.) When your old companions in sin would draw you aside with them, then say, as *Joseph*, *Gen. xxxix. 9*—'How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' Remember ye are not of their communion, but have solemnly renounced it, and have embodied with the saints. Is it not a very good reason not to serve the devil with men, because ye are not of the communion of his servants and society?

4. Do not retract it. It is too solemn and weighty a business to eat in again; *Prov. xx. 25.* 'It is a snare to the man to devour that which is holy, and after vows to make inquiry, *Ecc. v. 5.* 'Better is it that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay.' Some poor wretches expressly retract and renounce their sacramental vows, giving themselves to *Satan*. Many practically retract their sacramental declaration, particularly, (1.) By slighting the renewing of it, when the Lord puts an occasion of it in their hands. Thus many baptized persons never set themselves to partake of the Lord's table; some that have

partaked of it sometime, leave it off again. Does not this plainly say, that, if they had that to do which is done in that matter, it should not be done for them now? And is not that retracting practically? *Luke ix. 62.*—‘No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.’ Lot’s wife’s rueful looking back was dear to her. (2.) By living a loose and licentious life, as if one had never come under bonds to be the Lord’s, *Tit. i. 16.* The language of the conversation of many is, *Let us break their bands, &c.* O that such would consider—*Heb. x. 38.*—‘If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.’

Lastly, Beware of every thing unsuitable to it. Ye have declared yourselves of the communion of saints; do nothing unsuitable to that communion, and your own solemn declaration. Let not the way of God be evil spoken of thro’ your unsuitable walk, *Rom. ii. 24.* Always remember your character as professed members of the communion of saints, and walk accordingly.

Inf. III. Separation from the men of the world lying in wickedness, and fixed standing off from the communion of sinners, is the necessary duty of all saints by profession, and particularly of communicants, *Numb. xxiii. 9.*—‘The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations,’ *2 Cor. vi. 14,*—*17.* ‘Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?—Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord.’

1st, Whereto this holy separation extends itself,

1. *Negatively,* it doth not extend,

(1.) To the casting off the duties of natural affections, and relations to them, *1 Cor.* vii. 12, 13.—‘If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away,’ &c. Religion doth not weaken, but purify and strengthen natural affection, *Rom.* ix. 3. And the nearer that sinners stand related unto saints, they will have, and ought to have, the greater concern for them, both for their spiritual and temporal good.

(2.) Not to the casting off civil converse with the men of the world, according as one hath the call of providence thereto, *1 Cor.* v. 9, 10. ‘I wrote unto you—not to company with fornicators. Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.’ The saints are not shut up in a corner of the world by themselves, and therefore must needs have civil society with the men of this world. Neither doth religion divest Christians of humanity, or give them a liberty to be rude and indiscreet to others; but obliges them to ‘live peaceably with all men.’—*Rom.* xii. 18; to ‘honour them,’ *1 Pet.* ii. 17; to be ‘courteous,’ *chap.* iii. 8, 9.

(3.) Not to the hindering of us to do them all the good we can. Nay, religion obligeth us to seek their good, *1 Tim.* ii. 1. ‘I exhort therefore, that—supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men:’ And to do good to their souls and bodies, as we have opportunity, *Gal.* vi. 10. ‘As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good to all men.’

(4.) Nor to the refusing to serve God, and worship him with them according to his own institution. This our Saviour himself did, *Luke* iv. 16. ‘And he came to Nazareth—and, as his custom was, he went unto the synagogue on the sabbath-day,

and stood up for to read.' Thus did the apostles also with the *Jews*. Thus, in all congregations of saints in the world, there are readily found some who have no appearance of faintship, whom yet they do not so shun, as to refuse to worship God with them in his own way.

2. *Positively*, it extends to, and consists in,

(1.) Shunning all unnecessary society and familiarity with them, *Psal.* xxvi. 4, 5. 'I have not sat with vain persons, neither with dissemblers. I have hated the congregation of evil doers: And will not sit with the wicked.' They are not to be chosen for our companions of converse, or friendship, far less for companions of life, where we can have a choice, but we are to be companions of those that fear the Lord. The company of sinners has been fatal to many, *Prov.* xiii. 20. 'He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.' Men of the same employment, or that are going to one place, draw together; and should not Christians draw to Christians? It is sad to make Christian congregations and families, like *Noah's* ark, a receptacle for clean and unclean, *1 Cor.* xv. 33. 'Be not deceived: Evil communications corrupt good manners.'

(2.) Non-conformity to the world, *Rom.* xii. 2. 'And be not conformed to this world; but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.'—Ye must have another manner of life and conversation than they, if ye be of the communion of saints. It is a disgrace to religion, for the men of the world to have it to say of a saint by profession, 'Behold the man is as one of us.' Make them not your rule, your example, nor do you think to stamp an offensive way into a lawful one, by the authority of the multitude. For the multitude is in the way to destruction, *Matth.* vii. 13.—'Wide is the gate,

and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat : ' And their principles are lax, and their practice licentious ; they look on tenderness as niceness and preciseness, and wonder that you cannot take the same liberty they do, *1 Pet. iv. 4.* ' Wherein they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.' But look you to God's word for your way, and see yourselves obliged to separate from them in your manner of life. See the general rule, *Phil. iv. 8.* ' Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report ; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.'

(3.) Refusing communion with them in sin, *Prov. i. 10.* ' My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.' Every man is for his own master's interest, and therefore they are for bringing you over into the service of the devil their master, as you will be for bringing them to Christ, if you be real Christians. Beware of fellowship with them in sin, *Eph. v. 11.* ' And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them' Do not homologate their sinful courses, by approving or consenting any manner of way thereto, far less by actual joining with them in their sin, *Psal. 1. 18.* It is an affront to heaven, but a pleasure to hell, to see Christ's sheep and the devil's goats yoked together in one sinful course. Nay, communicant, thou shouldst be like the ermine, that will by no means pass over the mud that would stain its precious fur.

(4.) Refusing communion with them in the worship of God in a false way, or even in a right way upon sinful terms. The saints must separate from

all false worship, that is, worship which is not instituted by God himself wholly, but is mixed with human inventions and ordinances, *Rev. xviii. 4.* Nay, where the worship is pure, but some sinful thing is imposed upon you as a term of communion with the worshippers, you must refuse communion with them in worship on these terms, *Rom. iii. 8.* In these cases separation is not only lawful, but a necessary duty. And could I perceive either of these this day, in our case, in the communion of this church, I should not only think it my duty to separate, but also to press you to it. But though our mother has gone far back, she has not gone that length yet.

2dly, Reasons of this separation. Because,

1. The communion of saints and the communion of sinners are opposite societies, 1 *John v. 19.* 'And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.' So that joining to the one particularly, infers separation from the other. You may as well imagine to bring east and west together, to make fire and water agree, as to make God's family and the devil's to agree; the seed of the woman and serpent. Wherefore, having joined to the communion of saints, ye must needs separate from the communion of sinners, *Matth. vi. 24.* 'No man can serve two masters: For either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.'

2. The communion of saints is gathered out of the world lying in wickedness; so that separation from the world is wrapt up in the very constitution of the society of saints, 2 *Cor. vi. 17, 18.* 'Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.'—The mystical body of Christ is made up of those that were some-

time limbs of the devil: The branches ingrafted into the true vine were all broken off from our natural stock, the old *Adam*, that degenerate, dead and killing stock: Christ's family of mankind is wholly made up of run-aways from the devil's family, *Psal.* xlv. 10. So that if ye be saints at all, ye are separatists.

3. The design of erecting the communion of saints is, that they may be a separate society by themselves, under Christ their head, to his honour, *Numb.* xxiii. 9. *Eph.* v. 23,—26. They are a peculiar people, 1 *Pet.* ii. 9. How will they answer the design of their erection, and the honour of their head, if they be not thus a separate people? Our Lord Christ has appointed badges of this communion, *viz.* the sacraments, to be external signs of distinction betwixt his and the world: And can it be thought but they will distinguish themselves by their practice?

4. The profession of saintship is the profession of this separation, 1 *Cor.* xii. 13. Let baptized persons and communicants be ashamed to say they do not pretend to be saints; renounce your pretensions to heaven, for none other come there, *Heb.* xii. 14. 'Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.' If ye pretend not to be saints, ye must own yourselves apostates, that have renounced and cast off the communion of saints: And, communicants, if ye pretend not to be saints, how durst ye venture to sit down at the Lord's table? Well, in so far as ye were baptized, and communicated, ye professed yourselves members of Christ's body, saints, and so separate from the world; therefore ye must live separate from them.

Wherefore I say unto all saints by profession, and particularly communicants,—'Save yourselves from this untoward generation,' *Acts* ii, 40.

2 *Cor.* vi. 17, 18. Shun all unnecessary society with those of the world lying in wickedness; conform not to their ways, have no communion with them in sin, nor in the service of God in sinful terms. Remember ye have solemnly declared yourselves of another communion than with them.

Motive 1. Consider the authority of God that binds this upon you, *Eph.* v. 7, 8, 11. 'Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: Walk as children of light.—And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.' The men and women of the world are separated from God, *Eph.* ii. 12. They are walking contrary to him; and therefore he will have you to separate from them, and be as a 'people dwelling alone,' in the midst of the world's throng, because they are not of your communion.

2. The proof of the sincerity of your pretensions to faintship depends very much on it, *Psal.* xvi. 2, 3. 'My goodness extendeth not to thee; but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.' See also, *Psal.* xxvi. 4, 5. and xv. 4. It is evident men will chuse such company as is most agreeable in their opinion, to their own temper and disposition. And so one may very well guess at the disposition of a person by the company he chuses and delights in. And if thou art inclined to be a companion of the graceless, rather than of the gracious, it is a shrewd sign of a graceless heart.

3. The honour of God lies at stake here, *Rom.* ii. 24. If thou dost wear Christ's badge, and yet will not separate from the communion of sinners, but go with them in their way, religion will be wounded through thy sides, and exposed to the

mockery of profane men. And there are particularly three communions of sinners I would warn you against, as you would not stab religion to the heart.

(1.) The communion of drunkards. O how unlike is that to the communion of saints at the Lord's table. For the Lord's sake, communicants, when ye have the temptation, remember that word, *1 Cor. x. 21, 22.* 'Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and the table of devils. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?'

(2.) The communion of harlots. That is a communion of sinners, in an eminent manner, most inconsistent with the communion of saints, from which the apostle argues against it, *1 Cor. vi. 15, 16, 17.* 'Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What know ye not that he that is joined to an harlot is one body——But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.'

(3.) The communion of unjust men, in sinful, dishonest ways of getting gain. *Solomon* speaks of this, *Prov. i. 14, 15.* It is dear bought that is got at the rate of God's displeasure.

Lastly, If ye separate not from them, ye will perish with them, *Rev. xviii. 4.* If ye partake of their sins, ye must partake of their plagues.

Inf. IV. There are certain duties of the communion of saints lying on all the members of it, by virtue of their membership: The which duties all saints by profession, and especially communicants, are solemnly engaged unto by their partaking of the sacraments.

To clear the first part of this inference, consider,

1. Every relation wherein one stands brings along

with it a train of duties with respect to one's relatives. Relations are the joints of society, whereby persons are joined together for mutual usefulness ; and their union is the ground of this debt they owe to one another. This holds in all relations, natural relations, and voluntary ones too made by consent. If one be a father of children, there are paternal duties lying on him by virtue of that relation ; if he be a child of such parents, he owes a duty to them. If one become a member of a family, a kingdom, or any corporation, his membership lays him under such and such duties : Wherefore it is not to be doubted, but, in as much as one is a member of the communion of saints, he is under obligations to the duties of that society.

2. There is a certain connection between privilege bestowed on a man, and duty required of him. If one be admitted to the privilege of any society, he must with the honour receive the burden of duty belonging to it. If we receive the privilege of sons of God we must be ' obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance,' 1 *Pet.* i. 14. If we are members of the holy society whereof Christ is the head, we must be holy as he is, *ver.* 15, 16. ' But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation ; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.' If we be advanced to be of the communion of saints, we must carry as becomes saints.

3. The principle of self-preservation, natural to all men, evidences this. If one be taken with a pain in his foot, all the members of the body will do their best to recover it : For if one member suffer, all suffer by reason of the union among them, and the evil, if not removed, creeps from one to another. So the Apostle will have the saints in *Corinth*

to take heed to a corrupt member, and use the means to recover him, from this principle of self-preservation, 1 *Cor.* v. 6. They who dwell together find themselves obliged to take heed every one to his neighbour's house; lest, when the neighbour's house is on fire, the flames also catch hold of their own: Wherefore, whosoever is a member of the communion of saints, must see a duty lying on him as such.

To clear the second part of the inference, consider,

1. By partaking of the sacrament one declares himself to be of the communion of saints, and consequently declares his being engaged to the duties of that communion, 1 *John* ii. 6. He voluntarily takes on the yoke, while he yokes himself with those who bear it. If one pretends to the privilege, he cannot in reason shake himself loose of the duty: 'And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?' *Luke* vi. 46.

2. The sacraments are the external bonds of our union with Christ the head and the members, 1 *Cor.* xii. 13. Thereby we are sacramentally joined with the saints into one body, one bread. What is the partaking of them, then less than solemnly, as it were by oath, engaging ourselves to the duties of the communion of saints?

Wherefore, all ye who are saints by profession, particularly communicants, as ye are one visible body of Christ, a visible communion of saints, I would press on you the duties which ly upon you as such. And they are of three sorts.

First, There are duties you owe to the Head, Christ is the head of this body, the communion of saints, *Eph.* i. 22, 23. Ye are the profest members of Christ, and of his body; consider and conscientiously practise your duty to your Head.

1st, Acknowledge not, nor own any other for

head of the church, or communion of saints, but Jesus Christ, *Eph.* v. 23. Men may distinguish as they will ; but, as a body with more heads than one is a monster in nature; the scripture is plain, the communion of saints, which is the church, is no such monster, *Eph.* iv. 4, 5. ' One body, one Lord.' The *Roman* antichrist has long blasphemously arrogate to himself the headship and supremacy, and, at the lame reformation of *England*, it was taken from the pope there, but not restored to the royal Mediator, but made a part of their king's royal dignity. And in the day of *Scotland's* apostacy from their covenanted God, it was sacrilegiously usurped over this church by the powers then reigning, but contended against by the sufferings of many of this church, the Lord having made the Mediator's alone headship and supremacy a peculiar piece of this church's testimony, for which, alas ! the present generation has not been duly zealous, the which has helped to bring this church into the miserable pass she is at this day. But why should any pretend to be head of the body of Christ ? to be her head, while they cannot communicate life or spirit to her ? This is Christ's peculiar prerogative, communicable to no mortal.

2dly, Depend by faith on Jesus Christ, as your head for all. He is constitute the head of that society whereof ye are members, and by virtue of his headship their life lies in him, the direction and care of them lies on him.

1. Depend on him for vital influences, *Col.* ii. 19. — ' From which all the body by joints and bands, having nourishment ministred, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.' The believers life lies in him, *Col.* iii. 3. — ' Your life is hid with Christ in God.' Therefore it cannot be lost, *John* xiv. 19. — ' Because I live, ye shall live also.' The church is liable to great decay ; the

may be under a spiritual consumption, her pulse may beat very low, yet the sickness cannot be unto death, because there is still life in the Head, which will be communicate more abundantly to the members. It is our business to live by faith, and draw virtue from him, and not to live on our inherent stock of life and grace, *2 Tim. ii. 1.* Two things are here to be observed,

(1.) That there is a fulness lodged in Christ as the head of the body, to be communicated to all the members, *Col. i. 19.* A fulness of a fountain, which has not only enough for itself, but those that come to draw. There is a fulness of merit in him, for the life of pure pardon and comfort, and refreshment for the soul slain with a sense of guilt: A fulness of spirit for the life of sanctification; and ready access to it for all the members, *John i. 16.* 'And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.'

(2.) The promises are the conduit pipes by which influences of grace run into us, and faith is the drawing grace by which they are brought into the soul, *Gal. ii. 20.* The settled method of the dispensation of grace is, that, 'According to thy faith, so be it unto thee.' Faith believes and applies the promises, and so life more abundantly is conveyed, *Hos. xiv. 7.*

2. Depend upon him for direction, *Prov. iii. 5, 6.* 'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.' The direction of the whole body belongs to the head, and the direction and guidance of all the members of Christ to him, by virtue of his headship. Therefore,

(1.) Take not the guiding of yourselves upon yourselves, trust not to your own wit and skill. If ye do, it is an usurping of Christ's prerogative, *Isa.*

lv. 5. and ye will not prosper in it, but stumble at noon day. Where are the eyes but in the head? and therefore since Christ is the head of all the saints, he is appointed of the Father to be eyes to them in the wilderness. And the way of carnal wit has ay been ruining to churches, and particular members. The end of the way, pointed out by it, is always misery.

(2.) Look to him, and trust him for direction in all cases, *Prov.* iii. 3. God brings his people into a thicket of perplexities, and they are at their wits end, that faith may begin, and wait for a way when they can see none, *Isa.* xlii. 16. Then he leads them by words, providence, and Spirit. He is the pilot of the ship bound to Immanuel's land with all the heirs of glory as passengers: Their guide thro' the wayless wilderness, and they must keep their eye on him.

3. Depend on his care, *1 Pet.* v. 7. 'Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.' The care of the whole communion of saints lies on Christ as their head, *1 Pet.* ii. 25. The father has given them to him, devolved the care of them upon him, in such sort, that he is to be answerable for them, that none of them be lost, *John* vi. 39. 'And this is the father's will which has sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing.'—Thus the hearts of his people may safely trust in him.

(1.) For provision. He, as their head, sees to the provision of their souls, 'providing them green pastures, and still waters,' *Psal.* xxiii. 2. He provides for their bodies, *Isa.* xxxiii. 16.—'Bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure.' The faith of Christ's headship might still all anxious thoughts about one's through-bearing in any case whatsoever; for, come what will come, surely the head will ay see to the provision of the members.

(2.) For protection, *Eph. v. 23*. The saints have many enemies without and within; but, being settled under such a Head, they may be sure of protection in all dangers. They will ay be safe, if not from trouble, yet in it, *John xvi. 33*. 'These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.' From the sting of it, that it shall do them no real harm, *1 Pet. iii. 13*. 'And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good.'

The saints are oft-times in a mighty stir, having great cares on their heads; but O how happy would they be, if they would lay their cares all on their mystical Head, and be at their duty, and leave them all on him! 'Be careful for nothing; But in every thing by prayer and supplication—let your requests be made known unto God,' *Philip. iv. 6*.

3dly, Subject yourselves wholly to his government, as to your head, *Eph. v. 22, 23, 24*. The head must rule the body, and Christ must rule you, if you be his members. Coming into the communion of saints, ye resign yourselves to the head of that society, for good and all, for ever.

1. Be obedient to his commands, *Luke vi. 46*. Our Lord Jesus has freed the members of his mystical body from the law as a covenant of works, but with his own hands he binds on them the yoke of obedience to the commands thereof at his own commands, *1 Cor. ix. 21*.—'Being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ.'—What confusion would there be in the natural body, for the head to be directing and pointing one way, and the members going another. If Christ be your head, be ruled by him, renouncing your own will, and making his your law.

2. Resign yourselves to the disposals of his providence, *1 Sam. iii. 18. 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26*. The

members of Christ have good reason for an absolute resignation of themselves, and all their concerns to the Lord. The sovereignty of their Head may silence them: The wisdom and love of their Head to his own members, may satisfy them, that whatever he does with them, is best done. Their interest is his own, as that of the members is the interest of the Head.

4thly, Let the interests of Jesus Christ as your Head, be your interest, his honour and glory be dear unto you, *Psal.* lxxix. 9. 'For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee, are fallen upon me.' All the members of the body are concerned for the head, as the head is for all the members; and who so are not touched with the care of Christ's honour in the world, give shrewd evidences they are none of his members. Then,

1. Act for the honour of your Head, in every capacity seeking to advance his glory, *Psal.* xlv. 17. 'I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations.—There is a party in the world opposite to Christ, and they act against him. He has been going among us, saying, Who is on my side? and ye, by professing your submission to him, and declaring yourselves sacramentally to be of the communion of saints have solemnly gone over to his side. Then act for him, his truths and ways; act for him in your families, in your neighbourhoods, where-ever ye have access, who-ever they are that act against him.

2. Be ready to suffer for him, as he may call you. Remember the communion, of which ye have declared yourselves members, is, in this world, like a lilly among thorns, which will be uneasy to them; and ye were warned of what is expected of all the members, *Luke* xiv. 26. In such a long time of peace, it is no wonder many limbs of the devil have

got in among Christ's members, and many a hallow hearted sinner is externally got into the communion of saints, and the saints by this time, are much the worse of their company; and between foolish virgins, and sleeping wise ones, the interest of Christ and religion is going to decay. So that the case of the church, in the common course of providence, seems to presage such a trying stroke as will awaken living members, and make many dead lifeless members fly off. But if Christ be your Head, ye will be so minded as to suffer for him in his strength: Ye know nothing is more natural, than, when a stroke is directed against one's head, to lift up one's arm to ward off the blow from the head. The rage of enemies is against Christ himself; and to quit Christ, and go over to their side, is the way many take in such a day. But the real members of Christ's body take not that way, more than a man will put out his head to keep off a stroke designedly against his arms, the head being that which all the members will take special care of. In the mean time,

3. Suffer with him, *Psal. lxxix. 9.* If the members suffer, the head suffers with them; and if the head be pained, all the body suffers with it; such is the sympathy. If Christ's members suffer, he sympathiseth with them, *AAs ix. 4.* And it is reasonable that they who think to reign with Christ after, suffer with him now. This is a day wherein the glorious head of the mystical body is suffering egregiously amongst us, and wherein all his members are called to mourn as suffering with him, *Psal. cxix. 136.* 'Rivers of water run down mine eyes; because they keep not thy law.' Our head suffers from his open enemies, is wounded in the house of his friends, is suffering from professors and profane ministers and people of all ranks. Happy they who shall be found mourning for the disho-

nours done to his name, truths, ways, &c. they are like to be hid in the day he rises up to resent the affronts.

Lastly, Take care of yourselves for the sake of your head. The follies of a wife reflect dishonour on her husband. Men will take care of their feet, for that, if they catch cold in them, it will fly up to their head. O saints, by profession, communicants, remember that from the day you give up your names to Christ, and declare yourselves of the communion of saints, the honour of Christ is concerned in your walk at another rate than ever before. Your sins have a peculiar aggravation in them of dishonour to your head, *Rom. ii. 24.* 'For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles thro' you.'—Therefore, if ye have any respect to the honour of Christ, take heed that your conversation be as becometh the gospel.

Secondly, There are duties ye owe to the body in general, the mystical body of Christ, which is the church, or communion of saints, *Eph. i. 22, 23.* Ye are professed members of this body, whereof Christ is the head; and this body is not confined to one particular church, but is made up of all the churches of Christ, and particular saints thro' the world, united to Christ by his Spirit dwelling in them. Consider, and practise the duties to this body, lying on you by virtue of your membership.

1st, Sympathize with the body, as being yourselves of it, *1 Cor. xii. 26.* 'And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.'—The concerns of the church of Christ thro' the world should be the concern of every member. Distance of place, and differences in lesser things among those of the mystical body of Christ, should not take away this concern. Whosoever are allowed a place in Christ's mystical body, should have room allowed them in our hearts.

1. Mourn with the body under its affliction and evils. Such a kindly member was *Nehemiah*, chap. ii. 3. The distresses of foreign churches, as well as of our own, require our cordial sympathy: And the saints are naturally led to it, as knit with them to one common head.

2. Rejoice with it in its prosperity, 1 *Cor.* xii. 26. 'And whether—one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.' The thriving of the kingdom of Christ, in any place thro' the world, should be refreshful to all the members of Christ, and fill their mouth with praises. To bear a part in the joys and moans of the church of Christ every where, is the natural duty of all the members.

2dly, Pray continually for the welfare of the body, *Psal.* cxxii. 6. 'Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: They shall prosper that love thee.' *Isa.* lxii. 6, 7. —'Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence: And give him no rest till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.' The apostle is express for all saints, *Eph.* vi. 18. 'Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.' Confine not your prayers to your own private case, but in all earnestness extend them to the church of Christ in the land where you live, and thro' the world. Prayer is a duty wherein all the members of Christ on earth can have actual communion, they meet at the throne of grace who never saw one another's face. It is the joint petition of all the saints, *Thy kingdom come.* Pray for the building up, increase, peace and purity of the church universal.

3dly, Take your lot with the body in foul or fair weather. Ye have said, in effect, to this happy society, as *Ruth* i. 16. Sometimes there is a storm on the church of Christ, when the world lying in wickedness enjoys a calm. This occasions many

naughty members to change sides, to desert the communion of saints, and fall in with the communion of sinners, *2 Tim. iv. 10.* ' Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.' Ye know not how soon ye may be tried in this point; but do ye resolutely adhere to the mystical body. To move you to which, consider these three things:

1. It is safer to be with the saints in their lowest condition, than with sinners in the highest pinnacle of prosperity: For the darkest night with the former will have a joyful morning, *Psal. xcvi. 11.* while the fairest day with the latter will issue in a black and fearful night, *Eccl. vii. 5, 6.*

2. The trial of sincerity of members is one of the great ends of the Lord's bringing trouble on the body, to try who are wise and foolish builders. It is true, when the natural body, being sick, is laid a-bed, the tree-leg is laid by, but all the living members of the body go with it. So, &c.

3. Backsliding is dangerous, and speaks one not fit for the kingdom of God, *Luke. ix. 62.*—' No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.' It exposes one to the fearful displeasure of God, *Heb. x. 38.*—' But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him;' and makes their case worse than if they had never set heavenward.

4thly, Strive in all lawful ways to maintain and advance the interests of the body; for the interest of the church is the interest of Christ, and dear therefore to every member. The truths of God are a sacred trust committed to the church, the pillar of truth; and they require our deep concern for the defence thereof, against the assaults of error, *Jude 3.*—' Contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.' Christ's ordinances and institutions, and the several privileges thereof, which Satan and the world seek to

deprive her of and corrupt. they are Christ's purchase for his mystical body; and therefore they are to be held fast, and the purity of them contended for, refusing to subject them or ourselves to the lusts of men, *Gal. v. 1.* *1 Cor. vii. 23.* This will always require doing of us, holding hand to the maintenance of the precious interests of the mystical body, *Psal. xlv. 17.* and sometimes suffering, *Heb. xii. 3, 4.* It is a debt we owe to Christ, to the church, to posterity, and to our own souls.

Lastly, Be tender of the unity of the body, *Eph. iv. 3, 4.* 'Endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace;' *1 Cor. xii. 25.* Schisms, rents, and divisions in the church, are like wounds, cuts, and breaking of bones in the natural body, which exceedingly weaken it, and mar its beauty. They are the sin and judgment of a church, bringing dishonour to the Lord Jesus, marring the success of the gospel, and ruining the church at length: They bring much grief to tender souls, and expose religion to the mockery of enemies. The renting of the body of Christ has so much of horror about it, as may make it frightful to serious members. We must separate from none farther than they separate from Christ. We must not go into sin with members of the mystical body, more than with the world, under the pain of the displeasure of the Head: But we may lawfully serve the Lord in his own ordinances with sinful members: Even as tho' when one foot is in a mire, the other must not go into the mire with it, yet there is no necessity of renting the one leg from the other, but the one may still walk with the other on clean ground.

Thirdly, There are duties ye owe to the members in particular, as ye are fellow-members with them of the same body, *1 Cor. xii. 25.* 'That there should be no schism in the body, but that the

members should have the same care one for another.³ It is not in your power to know certainly and infallibly who are real members of this body, as others cannot know the same concerning you: But the visible body of Christ is made up of saints by profession, not openly contradicted by their habitual practice; 1 Cor. i. 2. And as such they are admitted to the Lord's table, upon their desire.

So there is a particular visible relation among all saints by profession, and particularly among communicants, as visible members of the same mystical body of Christ. And therefore, though they owe a duty to all men, of love, good-will, and beneficence, yet they are in a particular manner engaged to dutifulness to one another, as members of the visible communion of saints separate from the world:

Of this visible body or communion there are two sorts of members, official and simple ones; the former bearing office in the body, the other not so, but private persons; both members of the one body.

1st, The official members are the office-bearers in the church, which is the body, and these are pastors, teachers, ruling elders, and deacons. These are in the mystical body, as in man's natural body are the stomach, bearing the office of provisor for the whole body, the legs of supporters, the eyes of lights to the whole body. And,

1. The duty of the official members to the rest may be summed up in these two as they are, *Acts* xx. 28. viz.

(1.) That they take heed to themselves. They must take heed to their feet, that they walk as becomes the gospel, and their office and character; to their tongues, that their doctrine and instructions be sound: And to their hearts, that these be upright, that so both word and walk may be holy. This I reckon a duty they owe to the rest of

the members as well as to themselves : Because their holy tender walk is an ordinance of Christ for edifying the body, as well as sound doctrine, 1 *Tim.* iv. 12.—‘ Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity,’ 1 *Pet.* v. 9. ‘ Neither as being lords over God’s heritage but being ensamples unto the flock.’ And a scandalous untender practise, in a church officer, wounds not only his own conscience, but does a singular mischief to the church ; as a hurt in the eye does not only wrong it, but the whole body.

(2.) That they take heed to the rest of the members over whom they are overseers, conscientiously following the duties of their respective offices in the body. It is not enough that they be good men in their private capacity ; but that they be good ministers, elders, &c. in their public capacity. If the stomach had never such a good disposition, yet if it keep all the nourishment to itself only, the body would go to ruin : So, if church officers ply not their official duty, the church suffers by them ; they are useless, and worse than useless, in the place they have in the body.

2. There is also a special duty that the rest of the members owe to the official members in the body. And this also may be summed up in two things.

(1.) A peculiar concern for them, *Gal.* iv. 15.—‘ For I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.’ It is evident nature itself teacheth a peculiar concern for those members which are of the most diffusive usefulness in the natural body, by virtue of their office. Who would not take many thrusts through the leg ere he received one through the heart ? Who will put a toe in the ballance with an eye ? So, in the mystical body,

however selfish many are, yet tender-considering Christians will have a peculiar concern for official members.

1.) This should proceed from a reverential estimation of them for their works sake, 1 *Theff.* v. 12, 13. 'And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their works sake.'—Their work is great; if they have the honour, they have the burden with it. Their work is for the honour of the head, and the profit of the body: And many a time they are like the candle, which, giving light to others, wastes itself. The Master has put an honour on them; and a reverend regard to them, as his officers, is a duty acceptable to God in Christ; yet this respect to them is but civil respect, though the motive is sacred.

2.) It should vent itself in these:

(1. Praying for them seriously, 2 *Theff.* iii. 1. 'Finally, bretheren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified.'—As their work is great, their needs, temptations, and trials are many. The better it fares with them, it is like to fare the better with you: On the contrary, the worse it fares with them, the worse it will fare with you. So much is your own case wrapt up in theirs. Pinch the stomach with hunger, the plump members of the body will soon fail; let the disorders of it be cured, and the rest of the body will soon feel the good of it. The devil strikes at them, that in them he may strike at the whole congregation: And ministers get not only comforts, but afflictions from the hand of God, for the good of the people, 2 *Cor.* iv. 5, 6. Then even help them by your prayers that bear the burden.

(2. Supporting of them cordially, 2 *Tim.* i. 16.

'The Lord give mercy to the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me.'—Encourage them in their work, which will be a lightning under a heavy burden. Ye should support their credit, and cast a veil over their infirmities, *Gal* iv. 14. 'And my temptation which was in my flesh, ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus;' and not make mole-hills in them mountains, as many do, who delight to blacken those of that character; unlike a kindly member of the body, which will not spread, but endeavour to cure the weakness of an official member. And, by divine right, the rest owe them a competent maintenance, according to their ability, *1 Cor.* ix. 14. 'Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they who preach the gospel, should live of the gospel.'

(2.) A ready compliance with them in the work of their office, as the body goes whether the eyes direct, and the legs carry. An implicit faith and blind obedience is due to no man; but the mind of the Lord, held out by official members to the rest, is to be readily complied with, as they would not incur the displeasure of the Head, *1 Theff.* ii. 13. 'For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.'

1.) Imitate them, and follow their steps so far as they follow Christ. 'Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ,' *1 Cor.* xi. 1. 'Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample,' *Phil.* iii. 17. It is a part of the work to their office to be examples to the flock; and if that be a divine ordinance for the edification of the church, surely

the rest of the members are obliged to follow the example ; and if they do not, their practice, so far as it is holy, as well as their doctrine, will be a witness against them. This is a point but little regarded. Many will tell how church-officers should walk, that never once look on themselves as obliged to follow their steps in the way of holiness. But the way of holiness is but one to ministers and people, though many are ready to make two of them, and take the broadest to themselves.

2.) Submit to their instructions, admonitions, exhortations, &c. *Heb. xiii. 17.* 'Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves : For they watch for your souls, as they that must give account.'—What confusion would be in the natural body, if the members would not be guided by the light of the eye, or refuse the nourishment prepared by the stomach ? So unnatural is it for the members of the mystical body to be refractory to the official members in the discharge of their duty, to refuse their wholesome instructions, and to be satisfied without receiving benefit of ordinances dispensed by them.

O learn to look on ministers and other church-officers, as standing in this capacity and relation to the body whereof ye are members : Consider them as members of the same mystical body with yourselves, and as official members, in whose welfare, and regular discharge of their office, your own welfare is wrapt up. This would,

(1.) Make you modestly and christianly concerned that they may do their duty to the edification of the body, *Psal. cxxxii. 9.* For people to treat ministers imperiously and disrespectfully, and superciliously to dictate to them, how to behave in the exercise of their office, as many do, and value themselves upon it, is an argument of pride and

emptiness, of men's forgetting themselves, and regardless of that order which Christ the head has appointed in his mystical body. But for people, in a modest, serious, and Christian way to excite their ministers to their duty, to inform and advise them of what may contribute to their carrying on the Lord's work most successfully, as the Lord's word gives them warrant to do it, *Col. iv. 17.* and their own soul's interest in the matter gives them a right to it; so a godly minister would bless God for having such an advantage. Are not all the members concerned for the eye, stomach, &c. in the natural body? But do they fall a beating of them, or overcharging them, that they may do their office? No, but with all tenderness to them they endeavour to enable them to do their respective offices.

(2. It would put you on to a conscientious performance of your duty to them, your own souls interest engaging you thereto, *1 Thess. v. 12.* The fable of the members conspiring against the belly to pinch it, by withholding of food, and being forced to give it over by reason that they themselves suffered by that means, may represent to us, as in an emblem, the folly of a people undutiful to their ministers, to their own souls great loss. The relation is so very near, that undutifulness on either hand must be hurtful to both.

2dly. The simple members are such as are not office-bearers in the body, but private Christians. These owe a duty one to another, as members of the same mystical body. They are the visible members of the body of Christ, and so obliged to a native care for one another, *1 Cor. xii. 25.* — 'That the members should have the same care for one another.' This extends to all such Christians, through the world, as we have occasion to do this duty towards; but in a special manner it is to be

exercised towards those, with whom we live in actual church-communion; and partakers of the Lord's supper together are in a special manner under this obligation. As ye 'are one bread and one body,' so I would exhort you to make conscience of the duties ye owe to one another as such.

Communicants are a separate body from others, distinguished from others by the most solemn badge of the Christian profession: O if they would carry themselves as a people separated from the world to Jesus Christ, and joined together for him in one body, then would we see the benefit of communions, to the honour of Christ, the success of the gospel, and the good of their own souls.

The church is a society gathered out of the world, visibly joined together by the use of the sacraments; though they are in the world, they are not of it; and all the members of it should be a people dwelling alone, though in the midst of others, not reckoned among the nations. The truth is, there are many baptized in their infancy, who openly go over to the world's side; but all ye who are saints by profession, and particularly communicants, as ye profess yourselves to be of one body, and owe a Christian duty to them that are without; so I would lay before your the duties ye owe to one another, by virtue of your being visible members of one and the same body.

I. Love one another affectionately and sincerely, *John* xv. 12. 'This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.' To walk rightly in Christian communion, we must 'walk in love,' *Eph.* v. 2. Ye ought to love all men, being ready to desire their good, and do them all the good ye can: But ye owe brotherly love to all the visible members of Christ's body, which is so often recommended to the followers of Christ, *1 Thess.* iii. 12. 'And the Lord make you to in-

crease and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men, even as we do towards you,' *Rom. xii. 10.* 'Be kindly affectionated one to another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another. O what an inconsistency is there in sitting down at the Lord's table together, the table of love, and the hearts of the partakers never united in love.

Object. 'There are some so naughty in their way and manner of life, that it is hard to love them with brotherly love.

Ans. The decay of love among the professors of Christianity is most visible at this day: And I must say, I despair of seeing due love among church-members restored, so long as the church among us is so mixed with, and so little separated from the world, and until the church be more distinguished from the nation, for as fond as we have been of a national church. God separated them in the late times by the fire of persecution, and then this love flamed among them: Peace being restored, the church even mixed again with the world lying in wickedness, and that love died of course. And while are acknowledged as church-members, few, very few are loved as such. The New-Testament churches, though there were many hypocrites in them, yet they seem to have been constituted of visible saints, saints by profession, not visibly contradicted by their practices, *Rom. i. 7. 1 Cor. i. 2. 1 Theff. v. 5.* But more directly to the objection,

It is plain that brotherly love is to be proportioned to the degrees of the divine image discernible in any. And therefore (1.) where nothing of it appears, but people are openly wicked, we owe not this brotherly love to them: And every member of the church, private Christians as well as church-officers, should endeavour that they partake not of

that one bread in the sacrament. But, (2.) since the best are not free of some evils hanging about them, even to the discerning of other, we ought not to refuse brotherly love to any in whom any lineaments of God's image appears, though they have several things in their way altogether unlovely. It is the work of grace here to pick the pearl of grace out of a dunghill of sinful qualities, and to love the person for it, drawing a veil over many sins, 1 *Pet.* iv. 8. 'And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves; for charity shall cover a multitude of sins.' And not to aggravate the ills about them, so as to hide their good from our eyes. Wo unto us if God should treat us so, yea, or the saints; wherefore love one another.

Motive 1. It is the principal of the duties of church-communion, therefore called 'the bond of perfectness in the church,' *Col.* iii. 12, 13, 14. In the primitive church they were most dutiful to one another; see the source of it, *Acts* iv. 32. 'And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.'—Where it prevails, it will make every one concerned for the good of his fellow-christian, as for his own; where it is not, people, though in church-communion, will be ready to say, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' So, the want of it, turns all loose.

Mot. 2. It is a badge of sincerity. 'We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren,' 1 *John* iii. 14. And without it we cannot prove ourselves true Christians, neither to ourselves, nor to the world of on-lookers, *John* xiii. 35. 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love to one another,' For love to God will produce love to all those who bear his image.

Mot. 3. It is the most natural result of the love of Christ to us, *John* xiii. 34.—'As I have

> loved you, that ye also love another.' Never was there such love as that of Christ to his people in his dying for them: This shed abroad in the heart must needs make a loving disposition to him, and all that belong to him, for his sake,

Mot. 4. The near relation in which the followers of Christ stand to one another, pleads for it. They are fellow-members of the same body, joined together under one head, are members of one heavenly family, shall dwell together for evermore in heaven, and are joint objects of the worlds hatred.

II. Bear with one anothers weakneses, failures, and infirmities. This has many branches, see *Col. iii. 12, 13.* 'Put on therefore (as the elect of God holy and beloved) bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man has a quarrel against another: Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.' Be of a meek, patient, forbearing and forgiving temper, as to all men, so particularly to the members of the body of Christ, your fellow-members, and that because they are so. When we come to heaven we will have nothing to bear with; but till we come there, we will have occasion to exercise this grace towards others, and others towards us, since every one has their own imperfections, and there is not one to cast a stone at another on this score.

It is sad to see how easily professors are brought to cast at one another, how they cannot bear the least provocation, cannot forgive or forget injuries; yea, many there are who rejoice in the failures of others, and are glad when they get an ill tale of them, or see some false step made by them, which they improve to run them down, and to the judging of their state. But consider, I pray you.

(1.) How the Lord bears with you, *Eph. iv. 32.*

‘ And be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.’ O what would come of us if God would bear no more with us than we can bear with our fellow-servants! Dreadful would the measure be, if God should mete to us as we often do to our fellow-Christians. Does the spirit of the Lord suffer us long, and will not we learn long-suffering? Are we forgiven talents, and will not forgive a few pence?

(2.) How the Lord bears with them. He overlooks many things in his people, tho’ he does not approve of them. Shall not his example draw us to imitation?

(3.) Do not we ourselves stand in need of forbearance and forgiveness from others, *Eccl. vii. 21, 22.* ‘ Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken, lest thou hear thy servant curse thee. For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself hath likewise cursed others.’ And every day in hazard of being led aside with temptation, *Gal. iv. 1.* ‘ Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.’ Why should we then forget ourselves, as not to allow to others what we need from them?

Lastly, Is not your interest in the matter, since you are of the body with them? When one hand labours under any sore, does not the other tenderly dress it, and even ‘ these members of the body, which we think less honourable, do not we bestow abundant honour on them,’ *1 Cor. xii. 23.* So should we be ready to cast a veil of love over the infirmities of our brethren.

III. Watch over one another, *Heb. x. 24.* ‘ And let us consider one another, to provoke to love, and to good works.’ And *xii. 15.* ‘ Looking di-

ligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God ; lest any root of bitterness, springing up, trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.' This is one of the principal duties of church-communion, and, if duly managed, would be of notable use for the honour of the head, and blood of the body. It is true, the Lord has appointed some watchmen, by office, in his church : But the law of love among the members of the mystical body, and the appointment of the Head, makes also every one watchman over another.

I mean not to encourage men to a censorious prying into other mens matters, malicious searching into the faults of others, to get something whereupon to make them odious. There are abundance of these who are spies from the devil's camp, improving their discoveries, fancied or real, to the dishonour of religion, and wounding the reputation of the brethren. But that, with an eye of love, you would observe one another's walk, for your mutual advantage, to imitate what is lovely in one another, and endeavour to mend what is amiss, to prevent it. I take it under these following things :

(1.) Excite and stir up one another to a holy tender walk, in the several parts or duties of it, *Heb. x. 24.* Every member of the body should be a spur to another, to quicken his pace in the way of duty : So far should they be from being hinderances to, and clogs upon one another. All of us have a principle of sloth in us, which disposes us to flag and sink in our endeavours after holiness ; and happy they who have a fellow-christian to quicken them by word and example, *Prov. xxvii. 17.* 'Iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend,

(2.) Warn one another of snares in your way, as fellow-travellers towards *Zion*, 1 *Thess. v. 14.* 'Now, we exhort you, brethren, warn them that

are unruly.'—One may see a snare before another, which he is not aware of that is in the greatest hazard of it, and it is a piece of Christian duty to warn one of it. This is to blow the trumpet as a watchman, the trumpet of private warning, the which if he does not, he is guilty of the sin his brother falls into, as not preventing it.

(3.) Confirm the staggering, and labour to bear up him who is ready to fall, 1 *Theff.* v. 14.—'Comfort the feeble minded, support the weak.'—O what a substantial kindness did *Abigail* to *David*, in preventing the sin he was slipping into! An enemy is to be helped to raise up his ass lying under a burden, *Exod.* xxiii. 5. that he may not lose it: How much more, when one sees his brother under a weight of temptation, is he to help him above it? Like to be carried away with the stream, is he to catch hold of him, and do his best to draw him out?

Lastly, Admonish and reprove one another, in a spirit of meekness, for what is amiss, *Rom.* xv. 14. 2 *Theff.* iii. 15. *Eph.* v. 11. The infirmity cleaving to the best, with the variety of snares lying in our way, occasions every one sometimes to go wrong: And tho' it is easy to step aside, it is not so easy to recover, and come into the way again. This makes admonition necessary. There is a corrupt principle of self love in us, that we are apt to look on our own faults with an eye prejudged in favours of them; therefore God has appointed this ordinance of mutual reproof and admonition, that each one holding the glass to his neighbour's face, he may see his spots and wipe them off.

There is an authoritative admonition and reproof administered by church-officers, in virtue of their office, not only to hearers promiscuously, in the preaching of the word, but to persons particularly by themselves, in the way of discipline, 1 *Tim.* v. 20. 'Them that sin rebuke before all, that

others also may fear.' Or privately, as *Nathan* did to *David*. See i *Thess.* v. 12. 'And we beseech you, brethren, to know them—which are over you in the Lord, and admonish you.' The which, tho' privately administred, is public, in respect of the public person who gives it. But of this we speak not.

There is a charitable admonition and reproof belonging to private persons, in virtue of the law of charity or love, which makes them monitors of, and reprovers to one another. This, in respect of the object of it, is twofold.

1. General; common to all men within or without the church, whether visible members of the mystical body or not. It goes as wide as the holy law carries love to our neighbour. We are not to confine our charitable admonitions and reproofs to saints by profession, more than our love and benevolence and beneficence to them. We owe this duty even to these of the world lying in wickedness, *Eph.* v. 11. 'And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them,' compare with *verses* 8, 12. and ought to do it, if so we may contribute to the plucking of the brands out of the burning.

It is true there is some arrived at such a daring pitch of wickedness, that there is not the least hope of doing them good by admonition or reproof; but on the contrary, they are in hazard of being the worse of them. Concerning such our Lord's rule is, *Matth.* vii. 6. 'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rent you.' But we should take heed that we do not rashly put men in this class: They may be the worse of a reproof at one time, who may be bettered by it at another time. And besides, a testimony against sin may be necessary,

even in the case of such a one, in respect of others, witnesses thereto. But neither is it of this sort of admonition and reproof we speak. But,

2. Fraternal or brotherly admonition and reproof, competent to the visible members of the mystical body among themselves, 2 *Theff.* iii. 15. Though we owe this duty and kindness to all men, yet it is plain there are special obligations to it on saints by profession towards one another, and especially in communicants, who sit at one table of the Lord together. They are one body; they owe more than a common, *viz.* a brotherly love to one another; therefore, as in the natural body, one hand washes the other by a special duty; so let all communicants, and all saints by profession, know that they are obliged in conscience to mutual brotherly admonition and reproof, as they 'are one body, and members one of another,' *Rom.* xii. 5. And the sacraments, whether baptism or the Lord's supper, much more doth bind them thereto,

This ordinance and special duty of church-communion, which would be of exceeding usefulness, if rightly managed, as it is, alas, very little in use in our degenerate age, is often so marred, when it is used, that matters are made worse thereby, and the disease takes strength from the remedy. Peoples minds are alienated one from another; grudges are raised betwixt the parties; and so it is an occasion of evil. This ariseth from two causes,

1. The indiscreet management of the reprovor, who often ministers his remedy in such a manner, as it is apt to irritate the corruption of his brother, instead of exciting his grace or goodness as it ought. To rectify this, and remove the grand hinderance of benefit from this duty, I lay before you these following things:

(1.) Look upon this duty of fraternal admonition and reproof as an ordinance of the Lord Jesus Christ,

appointed by him in his visible mystical body, for the spiritual good of the body. It is as really so as preaching, prayer, sacraments, &c. are, *Matth.* xviii. 15. 'Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.' It has a blessing annexed to it, *Prov.* ix. 8. — 'Rebuke a wise man and he will love thee.' The consideration of this might influence men to go about it with awful solemnity, and to fear its being marred in their hands.

(2.) Begin at home in thy own life and conversation, to purge it; *Matth.* vii. 3, 5. 'And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?—First cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.' A man who attempts to reprove his brother, and is guilty of the same or the like offence, is like a profane minister reproving profanity, who cannot expect success, but to have it cast up to him 'Physician, cure thyself.' And this may let one see the mischief that his untenderness does, not only in involving him in personal guilt, but in the guilt of his neighbour's sin too, whom he puts himself out of capacity to do good to.

Quest. *Is one in such a case free from this duty then?* Ans. No, by no means; one's own sin can never free him from this natural duty. His business is to set about the work, removing the impediment of the success by repentance before the Lord; and to accuse himself, and profess resolution to amend, in the first place, to his brother, and then to admonish him of his fault.

(3.) Be not precipitant and rash in your reproofs, but proceed on knowledge of the offence, in which so much moral certainty is required, as one cannot

be justly blamed for rashness in thinking his brother to have offended so and so. The too ready crediting every thing that is spoken to our brother's disadvantage, or judging a thing to be an offence, which may be is none; a readiness to take other mens actions by the wrong handle, when there is a right one, and thereupon to reprove them, will more argue the want of that charity, 1 *Cor.* xiii. 7. than prudent zeal for God's honour and our brother's good; yet, in doubtful matters, it will often be found duty-prudently to insinuate that there is a suspicion, and what way he ought to remove it, 1 *Thess.* v. 22. 'Abstain from all appearance of evil.'

(4.) Let love to God's honour and your brother's good be the principle from which your admonition or reproof proceeds, and let it appear so, as much as may be, to his conviction, 2 *Thess.* iii. 15. 'Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother,' 2 *Cor.* ii. 4. 'For out of much affliction and anguish of heart, I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.' So little of this appears in the reproofs of many, that they seem to the reprov'd rather reproaches than reproofs, and to shew more contempt of the offender than love to him; and so the benefit by them is marred.

(5.) Be sure to found your admonitions or reproofs on the word of God, and convey them to your brother on a word of the Holy Scripture, the proper vehicle of a medicine for the soul or conscience, *Col.* iii. 16. 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another.'—How else can you think to reach his conscience. The word is the instrument wherewith the Spirit works, and upon which we have ground to expect the blessing. And

happy is he in whom the world dwells richly for this end.

(6.) Let it be managed with meekness, *Gal. vi. 1.*—‘Restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.’—Zeal and meekness are very consistent; they are fruits of the same Holy Spirit. Beware of mixing your own passions with this duty; that is, to bring common fire to God’s altar, which mars the acceptance of the sacrifice with God, and is ready to mar the success of it with your brother, *Jam. i. 20.* ‘For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.’ O it is hard to hold off splitting on this rock! *Moses* dashed on it, though the meekest man on earth, *Numb. xx. 10.* ‘Ye rebels.’—Which should make us jealous of ourselves upon such an occasion. Happy is that man who, when he declares God’s wrath, can best hold down his own. In a special manner use mildness when the offence is a personal injury against yourselves. Men who are like lions in their own cause, and lambs in the cause of God, are selfish naughty men. They who are like lions in their own cause, and in God’s too, owe their pretended zeal to their own spirits; not to the Spirit of God. But they who are lambs in their own cause, but as lions in God’s cause, leave convictions in the breasts of others, that they are acted by God’s Spirit.

(7.) Be patient, and continue at the duty as occasion offers, though the fruit do not soon appear, or though one and the same person may give frequent occasion, *2 Pet. i. 13.* ‘Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance,’ *Luke xvii. 3, 4.*—‘If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him, and if he repent, forgive him; and if he trespass against thee seven times a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, do thou forgive him.’ Thus the Lord deals with us with

long-suffering : So should we with our brethren. We should hold on as long as there is any hope of doing good by it.

Quest. *What should we do when all we can do appears to be fruitless, and to no purpose?* Ans. Our Lord's directions are very plain in this case, though very little practised, *Matth. xviii. 15, 16, 17.* 'Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone : If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother ; But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more ; in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established : And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church : But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be as an heathen man and a publican.'

Lastly, Be sure to take the fittest season for discharge of this duty. Every thing is beautiful in the season thereof, and there is a season for reproof, *Eccl. iii. 7.* The spirit of the Lord takes notice of *Abigail's* observing it with her husband, *1 Sam. xxv. 36, 37.* And of the blessed man it is said, He brings forth fruit in his season, *Psal. i. 3.* Unseasonable reproofs rarely do good, but often much harm.

2. An undue entertainment of it by the reprov'd. God has prescribed in his word how admonitions and reproofs are to be taken, as well as how to be given. They are to be received, (1.) with love and esteem of the party that does us that good office, *1 Thess. v. 12, 13.* As we esteem the physician that would cure us of bodily blemishes, so him that endeavours to cure us of spiritual blemishes much more. (2.) With humbleness of mind, suffering ourselves to be told of our faults, in order to our amendment, *Heb. xiii. 22.* 'And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation.' So

David, Pſal. cxli. 5. 'Let the righteous ſmite me; it ſhall be a kindneſs; and let him reprove me, it ſhall be an excellent oil, which ſhall not break my head.' (3.) With a practical anſwering of the end of it. This our Lord calls 'hearing of our brother,' *Matth.* xviii. 15. Compare *Prov.* xv. 31, 32. 'The ear that heareth the reproof of life, abideth among the wiſe,—He that heareth reproof getteth underſtanding.'

But where are they to be found who thus entertain admonitions and reproofs? Nay, the moſt part cannot endure to be reprov'd or admoniſh'd of any thing amiſs in their way. Inſtead of giving a Chriſtian entertainment to admonition or reproof, their proud hearts riſe in paſſion againſt him that dares tell them their fault; they will defend their deed, which in calm blood their own conſcience condemns; and if they can gather any dirt againſt the reprover, right or wrong, they will be ſure to fling it in his face on that occaſion. This deſerves to be lamented with tears of blood, if we could command them. To ſuch I would ſay,

(1.) Admonition and reproof is an ordinance of Chriſt, appointed by him in his church among the viſible members of his body, *Matth.* xviii. 15. and downwards; 1 *Tim.* v. 20. Why are ye angry at your brother for doing his duty he is oblig'd to do under the pain of the Lord's diſpleaſure? Why will ye be reckon'd members of Chriſt's family, and will not ſubmit to the ordinances and laws of his houſe? Is it fit the church of Chriſt ſhould be as when there was no king in *Iſrael*, every one doing that which was right in his own eyes.

(2.) It is that which thy brother has a ſpecial intereſt in, and a right to ſee to, as being a member of the body. Nothing more ordinary than, What are you concern'd? The eye might as well queſtion the concern of the hand in drawing a mote out

of it, or the face in wiping a spot off it; 'As the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee.'—1 *Cor.* ix. 21. His concern is plain he is a visible member of the same body with you, and your faults which gave offence, affect him and the body too. In a corporation of tradesmen, every member has a right to quarrel what is done against the laws of the corporation. In a neighbourhood of husbandmen, every one has a right to quarrel what is done against the laws of the neighbourhood. Yet, in a society of Christians by profession, one may not be allowed to reprove another for what is done against the laws of Christianity. 'Be astonished, O ye heavens!'

(3.) It is thy own interest, and the advantage of thy soul, to be admonished and reproved for thy faults, *Prov.* vi. 23.—'Reproofs of instruction are the way of life.' It is a real kindness done thee, *Psal.* cxli. 5. Why wilt thou be angry with thy mercy? Many are ruined thro' the want of a faithful friend to admonish them of what is amiss in their way. Men do not readily espy their own faults in full light; and when they have none to say, it is ill they do, they are apt to flatter themselves in their iniquity, to their own ruin. But admonition and reproof is the way to repentance and reformation.

(4.) The trial of thy state, whether thou be a real Christian or not, depends more on the way of entertaining admonition and reproof than thou art aware of, *Prov.* ix. 8. 'Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.' It is a good sign of a gracious soul, to entertain it in a Christian way, *Prov.* xv. 5.—'He that regardeth reproof is prudent.' It speaks a humble soul, one ready and willing to know his faults and amend them, to whom conscience is dearer than credit, and the approbation of God

than the applause of men. But, on the contrary, it is a very black mark in one not to bear admonition and reproof, *Prov.* xii. i. 'Whoso loveth instruction, loveth knowledge: But he that hateth reproof, is brutish;' and *chap.* xv. 12. See how the Spirit of God describes a wicked generation, *Isa.* xxix. 21. 'That make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate.'—*Amos* v. 10. 'They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.' This temper of spirit speaks a man to be unwilling to see his sin, and therefore unwilling to part with it: To be a lover of darkness rather than light; a lover of his own credit more than God's honour; to be proud, selfish, without due regard either to God or his brother. It is true a good man may, at a time, take a just reproof very ill, as *Asha*, 2 *Chron.* xvi. 10, but it is not the habitual disposition of his spirit.

Lastly, Not taking with admonition and reproof is a forerunner of ruin, *Prov.* xv. 10. 'He that hateth reproof shall die;' and xxix. 1. 'He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.' As it is a high pitch of sin, and runs up the offence to a height, so it is a presage of the approach of a heavy stroke.—'Let no man strive, nor reprove another: For thy people are as they that strive with the priest. Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the prophet also shall fall with thee in the night.'—*Hos.* iv. 4, 5. They who will not take an admonition or reproof from their brethren, may expect God will reach them one from heaven that they shall not get shifted. It is a terrible remark made on *Eli's* sons, their not taking reproof, 1 *Sam.* ii. 25.—'They hearkened not to the voice of their father, because the Lord would stay them.' See *Prov.* v. 12, The sum of what is said you may

find, *Prov.* xxv. 12. 'As an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold; so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear.' Let the reprover manage wisely, and the reprovèd entertain it obediently, so shall it be profitable to both. The impediments thus removed, I would press this duty of brotherly admonition and reproof among all the visible members of the mystical body, all saints by profession, and communicants particularly. Admonish and reprove another, for what ye discern to be offensive in one another's way. Make conscience of this duty.

Mot. 1. For the sake of the head, that is, for Christ's sake. The sins of professors and communicants do, in a special manner, reflect dishonour on Jesus Christ, 2 *Sam.* xii. 14. And therefore, while we see the visible members of that body dishonouring their Head, our hearts should stir within us for that dishonour. Here is a fair occasion to vent our zeal for Christ, to declare our sympathy with him, *Psal.* lxxix. 9.—'The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.' And, in such a case, ye are upon your trials as to what regard ye have to his honour.

Mot. 2. For the sake of the body. The welfare of the mystical body lies in the welfare of the members; It cannot be right while the members are wrong. Consider the offending party as a member of the body, and thou wilt see the body of Christ is concerned in his not walking with a straight foot, which may stir thee up to admonish him. Scandalous practices or offensive steps in a member, reflect dishonour on the whole body, *Eccl.* ix. 18. Yea, and the contagion, if not timely prevented, is apt to creep from one member to another, and so annoy the whole body, *Heb.* xii. 15.—'Lest any root of bitterness, springing up, trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.' For this cause *Paul* openly reprovèd *Peter*, *Gal.* ii. 14,

Mot. 3. For the sake of the offending member. It is one of the greatest offices of love thou canst do to his soul, to admonish him of his offence, *Jam. v. 19, 20.* 'Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.' Thou wilt thereby do him a double kindness. (1.) Remove sin from off him, which is a load so much the more dangerous, as he is not aware of it, *Lev. xix. 17.* It is hating of him, in God's account, not to rebuke him, as it would be not to draw him out of a mire, when he is sticking in it. If he had disjoined a leg or arm, wouldst thou not set it again if thou couldst? Such harm do wrong steps in a Christian's way to his soul; therefore,—'If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.'—*Gal. vi. 1.* (2.) Prevent his sinning more in that way. One wrong step, if not righted, makes way for another; and much guilt is contracted by one's not being told of his fault, being in that case, 'like a son left to himself, who brings his father to shame;' whereas a faithful reproof might prevent the repeating of the same folly. And as it would thus be a kindness to him in respect of the putting away of sin, so consequently in preventing strokes from the hand of the Lord.

Mot. 4. For your own sake. God has laid this duty upon you, under the pain of his displeasure; so your own interest is engaged here. As ye would not partake of other men's sins, make conscience of this duty, without which the guilt will creep over on our own souls, and the punishment thereof with it, *Eph. v. 11.* And why should one, by the neglect of his duty, adopt other mens sins, defile his own conscience, and mar his peace with God?

Better displease all the world, than make a breach between God and our own souls.

Mot. 5. For the sake of the common badge of the visible mystical body of the Christian profession, the holy sacraments, *1 Tim. vi. 1.* Is it not cutting to hear men say, Take up your professors, your communicants! O that professors would consider the Christian profession to be of that dignity, and so tender a point, that they might tremble to think of bringing a stain upon it by their loose walking! O that communicants would remember, that though the partaking of the Lord's table is in itself a passing action, yet it is an abiding holy sign, whereby they are externally distinguished for Christ, and that they would beware of such practices as may render their badge mean and despised in the eyes of the world. Or, if some will be so untender as not duly to regard it, that others would be so tender thereof as to check them for their offensive carriage, out of a regard to the holy badge of the Christian profession, the holy sacraments.

Mot. 6. For the sake of those who are not of the body, but of the world lying in wickedness. It is a piece of Christian duty to regard these, *Col. iv. 5.* 'Walk in wisdom toward them that are without.'—God writes his impartiality in his judgments, in not passing by the offences of those called by his own name, *Isa. xlii. 4.* And it would much contribute to commend religion to those who are strangers to it, and impress them with honourable thoughts of the communion of saints, if the members of it were faithful to check every thing among themselves, *Acts v. 1.* and downwards, compare with *verse 13.* otherways snares and stumbling-blocks are laid before the blind world.

IV. Walk holily and tenderly, so as your conversation may be exemplary and edifying to one another, *Matth. v. 16. Heb. xii. 14, Rom. xiv. 19.*

The church, in scripture-language, is often called heaven, and every member thereof ought to be a shining light there, and not the pastors only, *Phil.* ii. 15. 16. 'That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world: Holding forth the word of life.'—This is the most effectual way of edifying one another, *viz.* by a holy example. And it is one great advantage of church-communion, whereby one's soul is edified, while the members labour so to walk. For understanding of this, two things are to be marked.

(1.) There is a holiness of heart, and a holiness of conversation, *Psal.* xxiv. 4. 5. The former is the spring of the latter; the former lies in the inner man, the latter in the outward. Holiness of heart is a personal duty, which not the church, but God and one's own conscience can take notice of directly: Therefore I speak not of it, while treating of the duties of the members of the body one to another. Holiness of conversation is a relative duty, in so far as our fellow-members ought to see it in us all, and may see it where it is to their own edification: And we owe it as an indispensable duty to the body whereof we are members, *viz.* That our conversation be exemplarily holy and tender, *Cant.* i. 8. For we are not only to know Christ, and speak of him, but to live unto him, *Phil.* i. 22. 'For me to live is Christ.'—This is the holiness and tenderness I speak of.

(2.) Though it is abominable hypocrisy to do good works to be seen of men, that we may gain their applause; yet it is not only lawful, but a necessary duty of Christianity, and particularly of church-communion, to walk so as your walk may be exemplary, and to have an eye to the edification of others in walking tenderly before them, *Matth.*

v. 16. 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven,' 2 *Theff.* iii. 9. Tho' our internal religion lies only betwixt God and us, yet our ouvert acts are apt to be copied by our brethren; therefore we should endeavour to get the copy fair, chiefly to please God, and next to edify our brethren.

Now this exemplary, tender, holy walking, required of every visible church member, for edifying the fellow-members of the body, hath many branches, being as broad as the whole law of God on the outward man. I shall reduce them to these two general heads.

1. Be exemplarily holy and tender with respect to the doing part of religion and a holy life, *Luke* i. 6. The members of Christ are not to be idle, but active, dying to sin, and living unto righteousness. Be exemplary holy and tender.

(1.) With respect to duty, *Ecc.* ix. 10. 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might.'—Let your conversation be filled up with the performance and conscientious discharge of every duty required at your hands, that it may be uniform, 'Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto thy commandments,' *Psal.* cxix. 6. Let your duty be conscientiously performed in all the parts of it; since he is your Creator and Redeemer, refuse him no piece of required service, for ye are wholly his, *Acts* xxvii. 23. Be conscientious in your duty to man, for God's sake, and so join in your practice what God has joined in the commandment, *Acts* xxiv. 16. Neglect not personal duty which lies betwixt you, *Tit.* ii. 12. and have a special regard to the duties of your station, and the relation wherein ye stand, if ever you would have your conversation edifying. God has set every one of us in some station and re-

lation, and the conscientious practice of the duty of our respective stations makes a man or woman shine, however low a sphere they move in, *1 Tim.* vi. 1. 'Let as many servants as are under the yoke, count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed, *1 Pet.* iii. 1, 2. There is no person who may not this way edify the body of Christ, and be an useful member for their own and others good.

(2.) With respect to sin, *Jude* 23. O the mischief done by the sinful liberty church-members take to themselves! they fearlessly break down and go over the holy hedge, and others, seeing them before, do follow after, and so they prove ruining to themselves and others too, *Matth.* xxviii. 7. Think no sin little, since it is an offence against a great God, and makes way for greater, not only in yourselves, but in others too. For the sake of the Head, and the rest of the members, abhor it as hell, *Rom.* xii. 9. and *1 Thess.* v. 22.

(3.) In the practice and use of indifferent things, There the apostle's rule should take place, *Rom.* xv. 1, 2. 'We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour, for his good to edification.' It is not enough that the thing is in itself lawful; ye are also, in respect of your brother, to consider if it be expedient, *1 Cor.* vi. 12. What is in itself indifferent, may in its circumstances be rendered unlawful to you, in so far as ye cannot do it without the scandal of your brother, *Rom.* xiv. 20. The neglect of this is one of the crying sins of this day. Men consider their own selves without regard to others, and hence fearlessly lay stumbling blocks before others. The sense of the duties of church-communion, is much lost among all parties in this church this day. In

the natural body a thing will be refused, though it be good for the stomach, if it be ill for the head, &c. But, in this degenerate generation, the members of the visible mystical body are grown so selfish, that to please themselves they can drive over others, without any regard to their good or hurt.

2. Be exemplarily holy and tender in the suffering part of religion: And be so for the edification of the body. Others have been so for our good, *Heb. xii. 1.* so should we be for the good of others. What crosses and afflictions the Lord may be pleased to lay on you, bear Christianly, with patience, submission, and resignation, bringing forth the fruit of them, *Rom. xii. 12.* 'Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.' They are trials, and in them we ought to carry so, as God may be honoured, and our brethren edified, while we are by divine providence brought upon the stage, to undergo our respective trials. Consider here,

(1.) God, in laying afflictions on some of his people, has an eye to others good, as well as that of the afflicted party: Even as blood is let out of the arm or foot, not for the good of the arm or foot only, but the good of the whole body; though it is only one member that gets the wound, yet the design is for the rest of the members too, *2 Cor. i. 6.* 'And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: Or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.' As when one is examined, the rest are instructed; when one of the children of a family are chastised, the rest are thereby bettered: So our gracious God often teaches many at the expence of one only.

(2.) A Christian behaviour under trouble is one of the most influential points of a Christian practice,

likely to have the greatest efficacy on others, spectators of it, and witnesses to it, or to whose knowledge, it may come, *Heb. xii. 1, 2, 3.* Hence the blood of the martyr's was said to be the seed of the church: And the cause of the gospel never lost by persecution, while the persecuted were honestly carried through. Doing well is ready to influence others, but suffering well is far more so. A cross carried evenly and Christianly has a certain force to draw others to imitation, as it is most admired.

(3.) Those who, by reason of their afflictions, seem to themselves to be laid by as useless, are mistaken; they have a most precious opportunity put into their hand, to be serviceable to Christ and the members of his body, *2 Cor. i. 24.* 'Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake.' God has brought them forth on the stage, to take trial of their suffering graces, for the instructing, exciting, strengthening, and edifying of others. *Job* was a man who did much for God in his day; but the suffering part of his life has been of the greatest use in all ages since, and will be to the end. The psalmist *David* complains, *Psal. xxxi. 12.* that he was 'like a broken vessel;' but every sherd of that broken pot has been of good use to the church of Christ since, and has helped to heal many.

(4.) Wherefore Christians under their afflictions ought to consider that they suffer as members of the body, bearing the part allotted for them of the sufferings appointed for mystical Christ; for the sufferings of Christ personal are at an end, but the sufferings of Christ mystical are but yet a filling up, *Col. i. 24.* This would arm them with patience, as considering their particular trials to be in some sort, a common cause for the good of others as well as their own; and may excite them, in the black-

set lines of providence, to cast such a fair copy as others may write after.

To press this duty of church-communion, consider,

1. The interest of God's name and honour in it, *John* xv. 8. 'Herein is my father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.' The fruitfulness of those who are planted in the house of the Lord brings much glory to the master of the house; and their barrenness brings much dishonour to him before the world. And should not the one be vigorously pursued, and the other guarded against, by all those whom he has 'called into the fellowship of his Son'?

2. The interest of your fellow members in it. It is a dark world; they are the most useful in the communion of saints, who must shine as lights. Every action of yours, every piece of your carriage, being in church-communion, is apt to be copied. By your tender example you may do good to many; by your untenderness you may prove stumbling-blocks to others.

3. The interest of the gospel in it, *Tit.* ii. 9, 10. 'Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters—not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.' It is the glory of the gospel, that the power thereof appears in the lives of the professors thereof, stamping holiness and tenderness upon every part of their own walk: And, on the other hand, it brings great scandal on the doctrine of Christ, that the professors of it are unholy in their lives.

Lastly, Your own interest is in it for time and eternity. As ye sow, ye shall reap, both for kind and quantity.

V. Bear one another's burdens of afflictions, crosses, temptations, and trials, *Gal.* vi. 2. 'Bear ye

one anothers burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ, *Heb. xiii. 3.* 'Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body,' *1 Cor. xii. 26.* 'And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.—This is a natural duty of the members of one body. That part of the communion of saints which is above, is got quite beyond these; but those of them who are yet in the world are in the place of trial, where the clouds return after the rain. But not being standing each one by himself, but in the body with other fellow-members, bearing their part of the sufferings allotted for the body, there is all reason that the afflicted's lot should be looked on as a common cause, and each one should help to bear the burden with them; their burden of simple affliction, or burden of temptation. And,

1. Have a cordial sympathy with them, and hearty concern in their afflictions and temptations; and to express it as they know it, *Rom. xii. 15.* Let your hearts be touched with the fellow-feeling of the distresses of your brethren! and therefore 'put on bowels of mercy,' &c. *Col. iii. 12.* and lay aside selfishness and unconcernedness with the case of others. It is a mortified member that is not touched with the pain of other members of the body; and he who has no kindly sympathy with the saints, in their troubles and temptations, seems not to partake of the spirit of that communion, *Amos vi. 1, 6.* 'Wo to them that are at ease in Zion.—That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: But they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.' And let them know it: For what comfort can it afford to them, though your bowels yearn toward them, if they understand it not: If they see it not, it is all a case to them as if it were not.

2. Bear their burden as it affects them, and not always as it would affect yourselves, *Rom. xv. 1.* Many weigh the afflictions and temptations of others in their own ballance, so find them very light; and therefore pass them as unworthy of their concern, *Job xii. 5.* 'He that is ready to slip with his feet, is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease.' But the true way of judging of the weight of these things is, as they are apt to affect the afflicted party, and with that weight we should bear them, *2 Cor. xi. 29.* 'Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?' One mote will disturb the eye, when a hundred of them lying on the hand will create no trouble, no hazard. Shall the hand then be unconcerned to pluck it out? That may make a heavy affliction and dangerous temptation to one, which would be a very light one, and perhaps none at all to another. And it may be a greater act of Christian obedience in one to make his way through a temptation or affliction in itself small, than in another, though ten times greater; as the widow's throwing in her mite was more than all the gifts of the rich men, *Luke xxi. 1, 2, 3.*

3. Let your mouths be open to enquire into their griefs, as far as Christian prudence will allow, and your hearts open to receive their moans, *Col. iv. 7, 8.* 'All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you—whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts.' If any member of the natural body be sore and wounded, how natural is it for the hand tenderly to uncover and open it up, the eye to pry with compassion on the several parts of the sore, &c. even when they cannot remove the trouble? Such is the the case of human nature in its present state of weakness, that there is a kind of relief, though but a sorry one, in venting of their

grief into the bosom of one where it may be entertained with sympathy. The want of which makes afflictions and temptations often like a fire shut up, preying on one's spirits, *Psal.* xxxix. 3. and has made the best of men complain heavily, *Mic.* vii. 1, 5. and downwards.

4. Comfort, encourage, advise, and direct them suitable to their case, *2 Thess.* iv. 18. This is all that is within the compass of one's power to do for their afflicted brethren in some cases, *Matth.* xxv. 36. And thus may one, by a word fitly spoken, be a happy instrument to refresh the bowels of the afflicted, and blunt the edge of a temptation, *2 Tim.* i. 16. *Job* xvi. 5.—‘I will strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips shall assuage your grief.’ And here a special tenderness is required; and, with a due regard to the circumstances of the afflicted, all harshness is to be avoided, lest one add affliction to the afflicted; which was the rock *Job*'s friends split upon, and caused him to make that effectual resentment, *Job* xvi. 4, 5.

5. What you can in conscience and reason ward off, and carry off of their burden, do it; for ye ‘are members one of another,’ *Rom.* xii. 5. *Philip.* ii. 4. ‘Look not every one on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.’ So ye are to give all your spiritual or temporal assistances to the lessening or removing of their trial in a way of duty. This should particularly appear in shielding one another's reputation, which is often blasted by venomous tongues and open ears, which together lay a heavy burden on the suffering party, *Prov.* xxv. 23.

6. In troubles and temptations from men, support and stand by the oppressed for their deliverance, especially in the cause of Christ and religion, *2 Tim.* iv. 16. ‘At my first answer no man stood

with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge,' and *chap.* 1. 16, 17. 'The Lord give mercy to the house of Oniphorus; for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; but when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me.' We are not born for ourselves, but for God's honour, and the good of our brethren. And the leaving of those helpless, on whom, by the divine providence, the storm of the trial or temptation falls, is a forsaking and being ashamed of the cause of Christ in the world. Thus ought we to bear one another's burden, as members of the body of Christ. To stir you up to which necessary duty, consider,

Lastly, Earnest prayer is to be made to God for our brethren under their trials, that they may be supported, refreshed, and delivered, according to the will of God; and this whether their trials be from the immediate hand of God or man, *Acts* xii. 5. 'Peter therefore was kept in prison; but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.' 2 *Thess.* iii. 1, 2. 'Finally, brethren, pray for us—that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men.'—This is a special way of bearing one another's burdens, to bear them before the throne of grace, and to wrestle with God for them there. This is one of the great advantages of the communion of saints, *viz.* a communion of prayers, that when any known weight lies upon a member, the rest cry unto the head on behalf of it. And here I offer four things.

(1.) It is much to be wished that Christians praying together, when occasionally meeting, were more in use. And particularly that those who are in distress would not only require ministers and elders to pray with them, but even fellow-Christians visiting them, and that such should readily

comply with such a desire, both observing circumstances so as to discern when, and in what cases it may be to edification. It is very agreeable to the communion of saints, and to that love and sympathy which ought to be among the members of Christ.

(2.) As it is a commendable practice in the church, to require public prayers on behalf of the sick or those otherwise afflicted; and as the minister is the mouth of the congregation, so ye would consider, that ye ought affectionately to join in these prayers, as parties nearly concerned, and whose prayers for the afflicted are desired, forasmuch as the prayers desired are the prayers of the congregation, and not the minister's only. The language of these prayers is, Brethren, pray for us. And therefore I beseech you, let not this be a matter of mere form to you, in which you may only notice what is begged for them; but let your hearts go along with the words, even the length of the throne, for a brother or sister in distress.

(3.) Carry home with you the case of those to your family and secret prayers, and confine not your concerns for them within the walls of the church. If the afflictions of others do touch your hearts as they ought, you may carry a copy of the paper home with you on your sympathising hearts, to mind you to put up petitions for them in your families, and in secret. If ye have neglected this formerly, mend it in time to come, and when you have done it, know ye have done no more than what is your duty, *Heb. xiii. 3.* 'Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.'

(4.) Some cases of others in affliction may require of you extraordinary prayer, by setting some time apart for that very end, either yourselves alone, or in conjunction with fellow-christians, So *David* in the case of the child—'fasted, and went

in and lay all night on the earth,' 2 *Sam.* xii. 16. And in the case of others too, *Psal.* xxxv. 13, 14. And so in the case of *Peter* in prison, *Acts* xii. 12. — 'Many were gathered together in the house of *Mary* praying' The serious consideration of the kind of the affliction, and of the person under it, with respect to the honour of God, the good of the church, and your own particular interest depending thereon, must determine these cases.

I will add, by the bye, That where prayers are desired for those in affliction, the affliction being removed, thanksgiving should likewise be desired. It is but the prevalency of an unallowable custom, to give up notes for praying for the sick, and yet to give none for thanksgiving for the recovery of the party when recovered. If the congregation weep with them, it is reasonable they have occasion to rejoice with them too; if to petition for the mercy, to give thanks for it too, *Luke* xvii. 17, 18.

Motive 1. Consider it is the special command of your Head, *Gal.* vi. 2. it is a 'fulfilling of the law of Christ,' viz. the law of love. Our Lord Jesus loved his people so as to die for them, therefore he requires them particularly to love one another. His compassion to them was without a parallel, therefore he will have them full of bowels towards each other: He bare the burdens of the whole, the burden of guilt, and curse due to them for sin, therefore he will have them to bear one another's burden. Here is the special reason why it is called the law of Christ.

Mot. 2. Ye have the example of the head for it, *John* xviii. 15. 'For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.' He is touched with their afflictions, *Isa.* lxiii. 9. If any annoy them, he reckons himself persecuted, *Acts* ix. 4. A most tender sympathy he has with them—'for he that toucheth you, toucheth the ap-

ple of his eye,² *Zech.* ii. 8. And as for their temptations, he is not unconcerned about them, *Heb.* iv. 15. Imitate your Head, O members of the body; sympathize with them whom Christ sympathizes with, lest ye pour contempt on these whom Christ honours, and forget the afflictions of these whom he tenderly remembers.

Mot. 3. The trials and distresses of others are designed for your good, as was said before. Our merciful Father, in compassion to the rest, teaches them at the expence of one. Does it not then require your sympathy, that others are afflicted for your sake? *Col.* i. 24. Should not ye answer the design of providence, in exercising of those duties and graces which providence lays afflictions and temptations on others to bring forth into exercise on you? He lays the rod on your fellow-members, to bring you and many others to the throne of grace.

Mot. 4. What is thy brother's case to-day, may be thine to-morrow. Is he under affliction now? Thou may be under the same hereafter, or in another as hard for thee to bear, as it is for him now to bear his. Is he under temptation! As fast as thou seemest to stand now, thou mayest be as low under the same, or worse, to-morrow, as he is to-day, *Gal.* vi. 1. *1 Cor.* x. 12. Refuse him not that help of thee, which thou mayest need of him ere long. There is no trouble, no temptation, which befalls one member of the body, which another can certainly secure himself from.

Mot. 5. It is necessary to evidence thy being of the body, *1 Cor.* xiii. 26. *Col.* iii. 12. How can it be accounted a living member, that has not sympathy with the rest in pain: But that Christian sympathy of bearing one another's burden, speaks union with the members of the Head. That hardness, selfishness, and carelessness about the trials and

temptations of others, which is found in many, cannot but darken the evidences of good people so far as it prevails, and cast them as naught in whom it reigns.

VI. Edify one another by Christian conference, *Eph.* iv. 29. 'Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.' - 1 *Theff.* v, 11. 'Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another.'

—In so far as the body is made up of several Christians, they ought to have suitable conference, for the edification of one another as members, as they are brought together by divine providence. It is the duty of joint members of any lawful society, to treat among themselves of the interests of it and its concerns. Fellow-travellers to one place are to be useful this way to one another. Christians are a society by themselves, the communion of saints, they are fellow-travellers towards Zion; Christian conference is the native result of the relation. I shall branch out this in these things.

1. Those who by providence are cast together ordinarily, whether in a family or neighbourhood, so as they most ordinarily converse together, should labour to be useful to, and edify one another by their communication, *Heb.* iii. 13. 'But exhort one another daily, while it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened thro' the deceitfulness of sin.' Religion should be carried by us unto all our relations, and however we be posted in particular societies, we should always remember our general calling and relation, as visible members of the mystical body, that we converse together as becometh saints.

2. Occasional meetings of Christians together should be thus improven. There is a commandment, to speak of those things while men 'walk by

the way' together, *Deut. vi. 7.* We find the two disciples going to *Emmaus* thus exercised, and a happy issue of their conference, *Luke xxiv. 14, 15.* Were mens spirits habitually heavenly, even occasional encounters would produce something of this sort betwixt fellow-christians,

3. Christians meeting together on holy and spiritual sacred occasions, should, in a special manner, be thus improv'd, as on *Sabbath days*, and at sermons. Then it is the day calls for it, and the Lord's word and ordinances minister matter of Christian conference. Days have been, when people going to, or coming from ordinances have been sweetly employed this way, *Psal. lv. 14.* and between sermons, either went alone for prayer and meditation, or gathered together for Christian conference. But, alas! this is much decayed, and among none more perhaps than among us. I often see people standing busy speaking together, after the public worship is begun, and with my eye or voice must labour to break off the conference, the which, if it were not worldly, would surely be broken off by the beginning of the public worship. The wordly discourse of our church yard* has been, and is an offence and stumbling block to strangers, and is like to turn the reproach of the place, whereby God is highly dishonoured. This is a horrid profanation of the Lord's day, an open contempt of it and his ordinances, which speaks the gospel sapless and tasteless to you, and is a presage of a stroke, *Neb. xiii. 18.* Alas! how think ye one should preach to people making such preparation for hearing? How shall ye profit by preaching?

* What the worthy Author here complains of, is far from being a singular case, but may too justly be applied to most other places.

after such communications? *Isa. lvi. 13, 14.* How shall we pray for God's blessing on your labours and substance, or look to be heard, when ye sacrilegiously rob God of his own day at this rate? I beseech you, for the Lord's sake, and for your own souls sake, as ye would not provoke the Lord to leave me as an idol shepherd among you, who shall have no power to profit your souls, reform this practise, and either go by yourselves for prayer and meditation, or converse like Christians.

4. Fellow Christians should communicate their cases one to another, as far as Christian prudence will allow, and strengthen, instruct, and edify one another, *Psal. lxvi. 16.* The wise man observes, that 'two are better than one; for if one fall the other will lift him up,' *Eccl. iv. 10.* And happy are they who have a friend in need. How many might have instruction in what they know not, the edge of temptation blunted, their hearts warmed, and their souls bettered, by a mutual communication of cases, troubles, temptations, and experiences.

Lastly, Appointed private meetings of several Christians together, for prayer and Christian conference for their mutual edification, provided it mar not family-worship, nor be improven to the prejudice of public ordinances, as they are warranted by the word of God, so might be of good use (if rightly improven) to the advancement of religion, *Acts xii. 12.* *Mal. iii. 16.* *Col. iii. 16.* By this means Christians might improve both in gifts and grace, in knowledge and love, and they have been blessed of God to these holy ends unto many: And ordinarily, in parishes where the gospel begins to thrive, they are set up almost as naturally as the birds draw together in the spring. And where the gospel-work is going back, they decay, owing their fall, either to coldrifeness in God's matters creeping in, or to the fiery heat of division.

Mot. 1. The necessity and usefulness of it is great. It is necessary and useful for the honour of God, *1 Pet.* ii. 9. for the good of our brethren, *Rom.* xiv. 19. and for our own good, *Prov.* xi. 25. The tongue is called our glory, because it is the instrument of glorifying God, and so doing good to others: And, without this, men are chargeable with laying up their talents in a napkin, hiding their light under a bushel.

Mot. 2. The thriving or decay of religion goes hand in hand with it. Look to the times wherein religion prospered, and you will find, that 'they who feared the Lord, spake often one to another;' and as that wore away, so religion decayed. Nearest the heart, nearest the mouth. Where the fire is burning on the hearth, the smoke is going forth of the chimney. Where religion is lively in the heart, it will appear in mens converse.

Mot. 3. Times of abounding sin and approaching wrath is a special season for it, and calls the fearers of God to set about it, *Mal.* iii. 16. Such is the day in which we live, 'wherein iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxeth cold.' God is removing the pillars, and his judgments are abroad in the world, and lesser strokes are sent as forerunners of greater.

VII. And *lastly*, Be ready to assist the needy members, and to communicate of your worldly goods to the poor in the body, *1 John* iii. 17, 18. 'But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth,' *Rom.* xii. 13. 'Distributing to the necessity of saints, given to hospitality.' It is much to be regretted, that many of the poor, especially the vagrant ones, have no semblance of piety or member;

ship in the body of Christ. Yet even these have a right to supply from us, because they are God's creatures. But the poor saints have a double right to it, not only as God's creatures, but as members of Christ, and therefore the church is bound particularly to see them, *Gal. vi. 10.* 'As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.' The Lord in his wisdom has seen it meet to make some of his members poor in the world, not only for their own trial, but the trial of their brethren, who are obliged to supply them, *Deut. xv. 11.* 'For the poor shall never cease out of the land; Therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thy hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy in the land,' *Matth. xxvi. 11.* This duty I branch out in five particulars.

1. Seasonably act towards the relief of those members who are fallen into decay in the world, as ye have opportunity, *Lev. xxv. 35.* 'And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen into decay with thee, then thou shalt relieve him, yea though he be a stranger, or a sojourner, that he may live with thee.' As the keeping of a man that is stumbling, from quite falling down, is much alike with helping him up when he is fallen; so the relieving of a man at the brink of poverty, is much alike with relieving him in it. This duty I take to be aimed at, *Luke vi. 35.* 'But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again.'—And if it were more exercised, there would be fewer poor than there are.

2. Abound in private distributions towards the poor members, at your houses, or otherways, as you have occasion for it, *Matth. vi. 3.* *Heb. xiii. 16.* 'But to do good, and communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.' Occasions of this nature are ordinary, which try what

sort of stewards we are of the good things of this life which providence has put into our hand. It was *Job's* comfort in his poverty, that when he was wealthy, he communicated of what he had to the poor, *Job xxxi. 19.* and downward.

3. Conscientiously give in to the *Sabbath's* collections to be distributed by the church. God has appointed these, and the Lord Jesus has appointed church-officers for taking care of the poor in the church, *Acts vi. 1, 3.* and what they are to give out is to come into their hand by the church collections, *1 Cor. xvi. 2.* 'Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.' So this matter of the *Sabbath day's* collections is not to be looked upon as a business of mere fashion, but as a divine ordinance of the church, which should make people, out of conscience towards God, to give in to it, in a suitable proportion to the substance God has put in their hands.

4. Grudge not extraordinary distributions towards those of our congregations, but of other churches, whom you never saw, nor will perhaps see in the face, *Rom. xv. 26.* 'For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia, to make a certain contribution for the saints which are at Jerusalem.' This is a duty of the communion of saints; for all the churches and congregations of saints in the world make but one body of Christ, and they who are at the greatest distance from you are your bretheren. Why should any then think themselves unconcerned with their distress.

Lastly, Be ready to give of your substance for pious uses, towards the advancing of the good of the body, which is the church, *Prov. iii. 9.* There are several occasions people have of laying out money for pious uses, which want of due consideration makes them do grudgingly. But if thou hast an

occasion put into thy hand, by this money, to honour God, to bring about good for the souls of others, to contribute to the good of the church, thou art to look on it as a special duty of the communion of saints, and an occasion of bestowing it to a noble use.

As to what one is to give, every one must conscientiously determine that for himself: But here is the general rule, *viz.* That people are to give in a proportion to the necessity of their brethren, and their own ability, *Rom. xii. 13. 1 Cor. xvi. 2.* One is to eye,

1. The necessity of their brethren: For that may be too little for some, which may be more than enough to others whose straits are not so great. And withal, in weighing this their necessity, it is to be noticed, if the poor walk suitable to their condition; for neither religion nor reason requires us to foster them in voluntary idleness, or in living beyond the bounds of their condition, *2 Theff. iii. 10, 11.*

2. Their own ability. What one gives must be his own, and not anothers, for God hates robbery for burnt-offerings. Those to whom God has given much, of them much is required; those who have little, the less is required. Our own straight condition does not altogether excuse us from it. The widow's two mites were required and accepted, yea, people are bound to labour for that they may have what to give to the poor, *Eph. iv. 28.* 'Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.' And whatever is in their power to do for them, they are obliged to do, *Acts iii. 6.*

Mot. 1. Consider our Lord Christ looks on what is given to his poor members as given to himself, and will make honourable mention of it at the

great day, *Matth.* xxv. 35, 36. 'For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.' Christ is in them, his image upon them, they and he are one; and shall not their fellow-members regard them as such, in supplying of their necessities? We are to part with our all to him at his call. Sometimes he requires it by persecutors, and then we are to give it up at his call for his sake: Sometimes by his needy members; and then also it is given to him, 'Lent to the Lord.'

2. We are not absolute masters of our substance, but stewards of it, accountable to the Lord for our management. The church is God's household, and Christ has secured, by the the covenant, necessities for this life to all that are his, *Isa.* xxxiii. 16.—'Bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure.' Only he has put the portions of the poor members in the hands of others, to give it out to them, according to their necessity, and what of it is in their hand, *Luke* xvi. 10, 11, 12. Therefore we shall be unfaithful stewards, if we distribute not to the necessity of the saints.

3. They are fellow-members of the same body with you, and fellow-heirs of the same inheritance, *Gal.* vi. 10. 'As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.' The spiritual relation that is betwixt us and them challengeth it as a debt of love. Have we not all one Father, one elder Brother, one Spirit knitting us to one Head, and one heritage for ever, to which men are admitted without respect of persons? Suppose several men were travelling together into a far country, to receive a common inheritance, would not

those who have abundance of spending-money supply those who are run short in the way? So should we do with the poor saints.

4. It tends much to the honour of God, and the credit of the gospel and of the church. Every society looks on themselves as obliged to see to the supply of the wants of their members: And should not the communion of saints be exemplary therein, considering the most strait ties among them? By our Lord's own verdict, 'Giving is a more blessed thing than receiving, *Acts* xx. 35. therein we do in a special manner appear in likeness to the Lord, *Luke* vi. 35, 36. And O should we not honour with our substance him, 'who, for our sakes became poor, that we might be rich?' *2 Cor.* viii. 9.

Lastly, It has a reward of grace annexed to it, being rightly performed. It is the best way to secure a through-bearing for us and ours, *Prov.* xxviii. 27. 'He that giveth to the poor shall not have lack.'—What we have is liable to many accidents; but laying out for God is better security than laying up what God calls for at our hand, *Ecc.* xi. 1. 'Cast thy bread upon the waters: For thou shalt find it after many days.' What is thus laid out brings in to the giver, *Prov.* iii. 9, 10. 'Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.' *Solomon* observes the accomplishment of it, *Prov.* xi. 24. 'There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth.'—And though our good works do not merit either the temporal or eternal reward of glory; yet even the eternal reward will be according to our works, and that is an eternal truth, *2 Cor.* ix. 6. 'But this I say, he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.'

V. Admission to the Lord's table is a matter of

the greatest weight and concern, to be managed and gone about with all solemn seriousness and caution. Whoso considers that, being one bread, we declare ourselves thereby one body of Christ, must needs see this, and that there is great need to take heed to our feet in entering on that holy ground. And, considering that the church is a communion of saints in profession, whereof Christ is the head, there is need to look well who be admitted thereto as complete members of the visible body. And here it is evident,

1. That there ought not to be a promiscuous admission to the Lord's table, which some have contended for. It is not only contrary to our Lord's express command, *Matth. vii. 6.* 'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs.'—But contrary to the nature, use, and ends of that ordinance. It is a distinguishing sign, to put a visible difference betwixt the communion of saints and communion of sinners; and therefore cannot be common to both. Shall the badge of the members of Christ be put upon those who bear *Satan's* mark on their foreheads? Shall they be declared of the body of Christ, who are, to the conviction of the church, 'of the world lying in wickedness.'

2. Admission to the Lord's table is an act of church power and government. For, if the church be a body or society by itself, and the Lord's table the special privilege of that body, whereby one is declared and allowed to be of that body, there can be no lawful admission thereto, but in the way of church power and government. For what corporation is there, whereinto one may be admitted without an act of the governing part of it? Our Lord has appointed governors in his church, *1 Cor. xii. 28.* who have a power to admit to, and debar from the sacrament, *Matth. vii. 6.* and this belongs not to the minister alone, but to the society of ruling church-

officers, that is, the ministers and elders, for the keys of government, to which admission belongs, are not given to one, but to the unity of church-officers, 2 *Cor.* ii. 6.

3. There ought to be a due trial of those who are admitted to the Lord's table, that it may be seen, whether or not those who seek to be admitted are qualified according to the laws of the visible kingdom of Christ, lest such be brought in as may bring a stain on the society, and corrupt and defile them, instead of edifying them. This also flows from the nature of the church as a separate society, and a communion of saints. For, to bring in hand over head, without consideration of the persons, is much a case with throwing open the doors of the sanctuary, that any who please may enter. It is true, since God only knows the heart, no doubt hypocrites and naughty persons may be let in as honest hearty Christians; the devil's goats may come in by their likeness to Christ's sheep; but if their outside be promising, that is all the church can judge of, other things are left to God's judgment.

4. The whole matter is of the greatest weight, and deepest concern; and that,

(1.) To the admitters, who are, as it were, the porters of the Lord's house, and should look well whom they admit to the Lord's table, that it be not profaned thro' their default. There are two things requisite to give one a right before the church to the Lord's table. 1. A competent measure of knowledge; without this people cannot examine themselves, nor rightly discern the Lord's body, 1 *Cor.* xi. 28, 29. and they are declared none of the Lord's people, *Isa.* xxvii. 11.—'It is a people of no understanding; therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour,' The mi-

nister, whose office it is to teach, is the most competent, tho' perhaps not the only judge in this point. 2. A blameless life, not scandalous and profane, *Matth.* vii. 6. These cannot be fit guests at the holy table, whose conversation is openly wicked. And ministers and elders, who are by their office overseers of the manners of the people, are to enquire into this. And whoso duly considers it, will find it a most weighty piece of work.

(2.) To the church, and every member thereof. Is it not the concern of every one in the society, who be admitted as fellow-members of the body, to partake of the greatest privileges of the church? It is the duty of all to do what in them lies, that God's ordinance be not profaned, that the communion of saints, which is one bread, receive not harm by the bringing in thereto such as will stain and defile it, and that they be not partakers of other mens sins, *1 Cor.* v. 6, 7. 'Your glorying is not good: Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.'

Quest. 'What can and ought private Christians do in this case? *Ans.* If the case or offence of the party, being such as renders him unworthy to be admitted, cannot be removed by private admonition, either thro' the party's obstinacy, or the publicness of it, in that case, they ought to bring it to the church-officers, in order to stop the admission, *Matth.* xviii. 15. If they do not this, they partake of the guilt; if they do, they have delivered their own souls, tho' the church-officers do not their duty, and may partake with a good conscience.

(3.) To the party himself. It is the taking on of the external public badge of the communion of saints, a solemn declaration of his being one body

with the members of Christ, the which must needs be of great concern to any one who duly considers how solemn and awful an action this is. To go about this work ignorantly, indeliberately, and rashly, without due preparation, is a taking of God's name in vain with a witness. Wherefore,

(1.) Let these who have a hand in admission to the Lord's table, be careful and conscientious to approve themselves to God in this weighty matter. (2.) Let the whole communicants be concerned to see to it as they have opportunity. (3.) Let persons looking that way duly consider the weight of the matter.

These who have been once orderly admitted, may, at every occasion thereafter, claim their privilege, in case they have kept free from public scandal. But as for those who have not yet been orderly admitted, they ought to make it a matter of time, that there be no hurry in their admission. I have often complained, that some never shew their desire of admission, till there be little time left, either for themselves or us, to consider of that weighty business. I have endeavoured to prevent that, by giving intimation some weeks before, but almost still in vain as to some. May we be helped to take some method hereafter that may effectually prevent it. Is it not highly reasonable that those who by office are to see to this, be satisfied both as to the knowledge and conversation of those they must admit? And why should people be so conceited of themselves as not to allow a competent time for this? Let all consider,

i, The honour of Christ, how it is concerned in this matter, that that be not said concerning us, *Rom. ii. 24* — 'The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles thro' you.' — The comely order of the Lord's house is for his sake to be carefully observed,

2. The ordinance is in hazard of profanation, and all are in hazard of being guilty of it. The admitters bring guilt on themselves when they are negligent in this matter, *Ezek. xlv. 7.* 'In that ye have brought into my sanctuary strangers uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary to pollute it, even my house, when ye offer my bread.'—The whole church when they are not in their duty, *Lev. v. 1.* and the party, *Ezek. xxiii. 39.*

3. The church is in hazard of being defiled, *Heb. xii. 15.*—'Lest any root of bitterness, springing up, trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.' Some profane leaven brought in, may soon leaven the whole lump.

4. The party who comes unwarrantably runs a terrible risque, *1 Cor. xi. 29.* 'For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.'

Lastly, The sacrament of the Lord's supper is to be highly prized, and the partakers of it to walk worthy of their character and privilege.

1. Let all those who are come to the years of discretion duly value this high privilege, and timeously prepare themselves to partake of it. They must needs be under mighty prejudices, or very untender persons, who, without much ado, live without this ordinance time after time.

2. Let those who are partakers remember their character, as declared visible members of the body of Christ, and walk towards the Lord, and towards one another, as those who are the Lord's by personal dedication, and live in church-communion.

Thus have I shewn you what a society professors and communicants are, and what lies upon them by virtue of their being thus joined in church-communion.

28 JY 58

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